OF

Sincerity *and* Conſtancy

IN THE

Faith and *Profeſſion*

OF THE

TRUE RELIGION,

In Fifteen

SERMONS.

By the Moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

Late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*.

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By *Ralph Barker*, D. D. Chaplain to his Grace.

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TO HIS

SACRED MAJESTY,

King William;

THESE

SERMONS

ARE

Moſt humbly Dedicated,

By the Author's Relict,

Elizabeth Tillotſon.

THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

THE AUTHOR *of theſe Sermons was ſo well known, particularly for his moſt Excellent and Uſeful Diſcourſes from the Pulpit, that I ſhall not attempt, by any thing I can ſay, to recommend them to the Publick. I know very well, they have already that Credit in the World, which will render any Apologie needleſs; eſpecially when by this Publication of them, they ſhall ſpeak for themſelves.*

I think it requiſite, only to aſſure the Reader, That they are what they

pretend to be, the genuine Works *of* that great Man.

Whilſt I had the Happineſs of Converſing with him, he was pleas'd (at my Requeſt) to inſtruct me in the Character *in which he wrote all his Sermons; and ſome of theſe now Publiſhed, having been Tranſcrib'd by me ſome years ſince, were found amongſt his Papers, Corrected with his own Hand.*

By what he had been pleas'd to ſay, that I was Maſter of his Character, *and by the few Errata he obſerv'd in my firſt Performance, I was encouraged to ſet about this Work; in which I can Solemnly Profeſs, that I have obſerv'd a Religious care and ſtrictneſs, neither to omit nor add any thing, but an* of, *a* the, *or the like, when the Senſe plainly requir'd it; and of that too I have given notice, by affixing this Mark* ["] *upon the Word which I did*

not

not find in the Original; ſo that the Reader is left to judge of the fitneſs of ſuch Additions; which, after all, are ſo very few and inconſiderable, as ſcarcely to deſerve this notice; only that he might be ſatisfied (in caſe the Printer do his part) that he hath here, what he expects, a perfect Tranſcript of theſe Sermons; *and in them a true and lively ſtrain of* Chriſtian Piety and Eloquence, *ſo fitted to all Capacities, that I cannot but hope, all that ſhall read them will be the better for them, even thoſe not excepted (if there be any ſuch) who may have entertain'd any unreaſonable Prejudices againſt them, or their* moſt Reverend Author.

I have always thought, and often ſaid it, that if any were Leaven'd with Prejudice againſt Him, they were, to be ſure, ſuch as did not know him; and the farther I go in his Writings, the more I am aſſur'd, that

that it muſt be ſo. But becauſe the Sermons themſelves, to which I refer, are not yet all of them Publiſhed, I muſt leave this to the Judgment of the Impartial Reader, when the whole ſhall be finiſh'd, which is deſign'd with all convenient ſpeed.

Lambeth.
April 2. 1695.

Ra. Barker.

THE

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SERMON I.

Preached at

KINGSTON,

July 29. 1694.

The laſt his GRACE Preached.

Of Sincerity towards God and Man.

JOHN I. 47.

Jeſus ſaw Nathanael coming to him, and ſaith of him, Behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

WHO this *Nathanael* was, upon whom our Saviour beſtows this extraordinary Character, doth not certainly appear, his Name

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being but once more mention'd in the whole Hiſtory of the Goſpel: For certain, he was a good Man, who deſerved this extraordinary Commendation; and none but our Saviour, who knew what was in Man, and needed not that any ſhould tell him, could have given it, eſpecially of one whom he had never ſeen before that time; for when *Jeſus ſaw him coming to him, he ſaith of him, Behold an Iſraelite indeed.*

The whole nation of the *Jews* were *Iſraelites* by Natural Deſcent, being the Seed of *Jacob*, or *Iſrael*; but in a ſpecial and more excellent ſenſe, none are eſteemed the true Poſterity of *Iſrael*, but thoſe, who reſembled this Father of their Nation, in true Piety, and Goodneſs; for (as the Apoſtle reaſons) *they are not all Iſrael, who are of Iſrael*; they only are *Iſraelites* indeed, who reſemble good Old *Jacob*, in the ſincerity of his Piety, and the ſimplicity of his Temper, and Diſpoſition; for our Saviour ſeems here to allude to that Character which is given of *Jacob* (Gen. 25. 27.) That *he was a plain Man*, or, as the *Hebrew* word ſignifies, *a perfect and ſincere Man*, in oppoſition to his Brother *Eſau*, who is ſaid to be *cunning*; ſo that to be an *Iſraelite*,

lite indeed, is to be a downright honeſt Man, without fraud, and guile, without any arts of hypocriſie and deceit. Serm. 1.

In ſpeaking of this vertue of Sincerity, which is the higheſt Character and Commendation of a good Man, I ſhall conſider it, as it reſpects God, and Man. As it reſpects God, ſo it imports the truth and ſincerity of our Piety and Devotion towards him. As it regards Men, ſo it ſignifies a ſimplicity of Mind and Manners, in our Carriage and Converſation, one towards another; both theſe are included, and very probably were intended, in the Character which our Saviour here gives of *Nathanael*.

I. I ſhall conſider this Grace, or vertue of ſincerity, as it reſpects God; and ſo it imports the truth and ſincerity of our Piety toward him, that we heartily, believe, and fear, and honour him, and that the outward expreſſions of our Piety and obedience to him are the genuine iſſue of our inward apprehenſions of him, and affections towards him; and this no doubt our Saviour intended in the firſt place in the Character of this good Man, that he was a Man of a real and ſubſtantial and unaffected Piety, and in truth,

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what he appeared to be; that he did sincerely love God, and his Truth, and was ready to embrace it, whenever it was fairly proposed to him, as did plainly appear in his Carriage towards our Saviour; for when *Philip* invited him to *come and see* him, he did not conceal the prejudice and objection he had against him, grounded upon a common, but uncharitable Proverb, That *out of* Nazareth *ariseth no Prophet*; but having an honest and sincere mind, he was not so carried away by a popular prejudice, as not to have patience to be better informed, and therefore was easily perswaded to *go and see* our Saviour, and to discourse with him himself, and being satisfied that he was the *Messias*, he presently owns him for such, calling him *the Son of God*, and *the King of Israel*. And because sincerity is the very heart and substance of Religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and disposition, but to enquire into the nature and properties of it, that we may know when we have it, and may have the comfort of it. I shall mention *five* or *six* Properties of a sincere Piety, by which Men may sufficiently know the

the integrity of their hearts towards God. Serm. 1.

1. Our Piety is then ſincere, when the chief reaſons and predominant motives of it are Religious; and I call *that a* Religious or rational motive, which regards God, and another World, in oppoſition to Men, and to our preſent temporal Advantages; when the principal and ſwaying motives of our Piety, are a ſenſe of God's Authority over us, and of our Duty and obligation to him; a fear of his Diſpleaſure and Threatnings, and the hopes of the Glorious Reward which he hath promiſed to Obedience; theſe motives are properly Religious, becauſe they reſpect God, and are the Arguments to Obedience, which he himſelf offers to us, to perſwade us to our Duty; and *that* is a ſincere Piety, which is wrought in us by theſe Conſiderations, how unequally ſoever mixed; for even in the moſt of Men Fear does many times prevail more than Love, and in caſe of great temptation, may preſerve Men from ſin, when perhaps no other conſideration will do it. On the contrary, that is an unſincere Piety, to which we are moved, meerly by the regard of Men, and the conſideration of ſome

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temporal Advantages. And when theſe have the chief influence upon us, it is eaſie for any Man to diſcern in himſelf; for he that will carefully obſerve himſelf, can hardly be ignorant of the true ſpring and motive of his own actions: But there is one ſign, whereby a Man may certainly know that his heart is not right towards God, and that is, if when theſe motives are abſent, our Piety and Zeal for the true Religion doth either ceaſe, or is ſenſibly cooled and abated; as if Impiety, or Popery, or any thing elſe that is bad, begin to be in faſhion, and to have the Countenance of great Examples, if thoſe whom we fear, and upon whom we depend, do diſcover any inclination that way, if the garb of Religion ceaſe to be for our intereſt, or in the revolution of things, happen to be contrary to it; if in any of theſe caſes, we let fall the profeſſion of our Religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain and undeniable demonſtration of the inſincerity of our former Piety.

2. A ſincere Piety muſt be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us; for as the Apoſtle reaſons in another caſe, *he is not a* Jew *who is one outwardly, but he who is one inwardly*, and *in the heart*;

heart; and without this all outward acts of Piety and Devotion are hypocriſie, a picture of Religion, and *a form of Godlineſs*, without the Life and *Power* of it.

3. A Third Evidence of a ſincere Piety is, when Men are Religious in private and in ſecret, as well as in publick and in the open view of Men. He is truly devout, who is ſo in his Family, and in his Cloſet, where he hath no Witneſs, but God, and his own Soul, as well as in the Church. He is a downright honeſt Man, who will make good his Word, and perform his Promiſe, when no proof can be made of it, and no Law compel him to it, as readily as if there had been an hundred Witneſſes of it. He is ſincerely juſt, who will not detain from another his right, though he be ignorant of it; nor wrong any Man, tho' he could do it with all the ſecreſie and ſafety in the World; who will not impoſe upon anothers ignorance or unskilfulneſs, tho' never ſo much to his own benefit and advantage. He is truly charitable, who would not only as ſoon, but rather ſooner give his Alms in ſecret, than in the ſight of Men: and he is truly grateful, who when there is occaſion

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and oportunity, will acknowledge a kindneſs and requite a benefit to the Relations of his Deceaſed Friend, though he be ſure that all memory of the Obligation dyed with him, and that none are conſcious of it, but God and his own Conſcience. And indeed there is ſcarce any act of Piety, and Vertue, the ſincerity of which may not by this evidence be known by us: As on the contrary a Man may for certain conclude himſelf a Hypocrite, if he be not the ſame in the preſence of God, and his own Conſcience, that he is in the ſight of Men.

4. Another Evidence of a ſincere Piety is a conſtant tenour of goodneſs in the general courſe of our Lives. I do not now ſpeak of the firſt beginnings of Piety, in new Converts, which are many times very imperfect, and ſuch as afford little or no evidence of a Mans ſincerity; but in thoſe who have made any conſiderable progreſs in goodneſs; the habits of any known ſin, and the wilful and deliberate neglect of our Duties, and even the ſingle acts of more heinous Crimes, will bring in queſtion our ſincerity, and are by no means to be ſhelter'd under the name of infirmity; for theſe the Grace of God,

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God, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, will inable us to ſubdue; and he is not ſincerely good, who doth not ſeriouſly endeavour to be as good as he can, and does not make uſe of that Grace which God is ready to afford to all the purpoſes, though not of a perfect, yet of a ſincere obedience to the Laws of God.

5. Another Evidence of a ſincere Piety is, that our obedience to God be uniform and univerſal, equally reſpecting all the Laws of God, and every part of our Duty; that it do not content it ſelf with an eſpecial regard to ſome Precepts of the Law though never ſo conſiderable, and allow it ſelf in the breach, or neglect of the reſt; no nor with obſerving the Duties of one Table of the Law, if it overlook the other; no nor with obedience to all the Commandments of God, one only excepted. St. *James* puts this caſe, and determines, that *He that keeps the whole Law, ſaving that he offends in one point, is guilty of all*, that is, is not ſincere in his obedience to the reſt. And therefore we muſt take great heed that we do not ſet the Commandments of God at odds, and daſh the two Tables of the Law, againſt one another, leſt, as St. *James* ſays, we *break*

the

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the whole Law: And yet I fear this is too common a fault, even amongst those who make a great profession of Piety that they are not sufficiently sensible of the obligation and necessity of the Duties of the second Table, and of the excellency of those Graces, and Vertues which respect our Carriage and Conversation with one another. Men do not seem to consider, that God did not give Laws to us, for his own sake, but ours and therefore that he did not only design that we should Honour him, but that we should be happy in one another; for which reason, he joyns with our humble and dutiful Deportment towards himself, the offices of Justice and Charity towards others, Mich. 6. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* And 1 John 4. 21 *This Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.* And yet it is too visible that many, who make a great profession of Piety toward God, are very defective in Moral Duties; very unpeaceable, and turbulent in their Spirits, very peevish and passionate very conceited and censorious, as if their pro

profeſſion of Godlineſs did exempt them from the care and practice of Chriſtian Vertues: But we muſt not ſo fix our eye upon Heaven, as to forget that we walk upon the Earth, and to neglect the ordering of our ſteps and Converſation among Men, leſt while we are gazing upon the Stars, we fall into the Ditch of groſs and foul Immorality. Serm. 1.

It is very poſſible, that Men may be devout and zealous in Religion, very nice, and ſcrupulous about the Worſhip and Service of God; and yet becauſe of their palpable defect in points of Juſtice and Honeſty, of Meekneſs and Humility, of Peace and Charity, may be groſs and odious Hypocrites. For Men muſt not think for ſome acts, either of outward or inward Piety, to compound with God for the neglect of Mercy and Judgment, or to demand it as a right from Men to be excuſed from the great Duties and Vertues of Humane Converſation; or pretend to be above them, becauſe they relate chiefly to this World, and to the temporal happineſs of Men; as if it were the priviledge of great Devotion, to give a licenſe to Men to be peeviſh and froward, ſower and moroſe, ſupercilious

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cilious and cenſorious in their behaviour towards others. Men muſt have a great care, that they be not intent upon the outward parts of Religion, to the prejudice of inward and real goodneſs, and that they do not ſo uſe the means of Religion, as to neglect and loſe the main end of it; that they do not place all Religion in Faſting and outward Mortification: For though theſe things be very uſeful and neceſſary in their place, if they be diſcreetly managed, and made ſubſervient to the great ends of Religion; yet it is often ſeen that Men have ſo unequal a reſpect to the ſeveral parts of their Duty, that Faſting and Corporal ſeverity, thoſe meager and lean Duties of Piety, in compariſon, do like *Pharaoh's lean kine, devour and eat up* almoſt all *the goodly and well favoured*, the great and ſubſtantial Duties of the Chriſtian Life; and therefore Men muſt take great heed, leſt whilſt they are ſo intent upon mortifying themſelves, they do not mortifie Virtue and good Nature, Humility and Meekneſs and Charity, things highly valuable in themſelves, and amiable in the eyes of Men, and in the ſight of God of great price.

For

For the neglect of the Moral Duties of the ſecond Table is not only a mighty candal to Religion, but of pernicious onſequence many other ways. A fierce nd ill governed, an ignorant and injuicious Zeal for the Honour of God, nd ſomething or other belonging neeſſarily, as they think, to his true Worhip and Service, hath made many Men o many unreaſonable, immoral and imious things, of which Hiſtory will furiſh us with innumerable inſtances, in he practice of the *Jeſuits*, and other Zeaots of the Church of *Rome*; and there re not wanting too many examples of his kind amongſt our ſelves: for Men hat are not ſober, and conſiderate in their eligion, but give themſelves up to the onduct of blind prejudice, and furious eal, do eaſily perſwade themſelves that ny thing is lawful, which they ſtrongly ncy to tend to the Honour of God, and o the advancement of the cauſe of Region. Hence ſome have proceeded to hat height of abſurdity, in their Zeal r their Religion and Church, as to hink it not only lawful but highly commendable and meritorious, to equivoate upoc Oath, and break Faith with ereticks, and to deſtroy all thoſe that differ

differ from them; as if it were Piety i
ſome caſes, to lie for the Truth, and t
kill Men for God's ſake.

So that if we would approve the in
tegrity of our hearts to God, and evi
dence to our ſelves the ſincerity of ou
Obedience, we ought impartially to re
gard all the Laws of God, and ever
part of our Duty: and if we do no
our heart is not upright with God. 'T
obſervable that ſincerity in Scripture
often call'd by the name of integrity
and Perfection, becauſe it is integra
ted, and made up of all the parts of ou
Duty.

6. The laſt evidence I ſhall mentio
of the ſincerity of our Religion is, if i
hold out againſt perſecution, and en
dure the fiery tryal. This is the utmo
proof of our integrity, when we ar
called to bear the Croſs, to be willin
then to expoſe all our worldly intereſt
and even life it ſelf, for the Cauſe o
God, and Religion. This is a tryal which
God doth not always call his faithfu
Servants to; but they are always to b
prepared for it, in the purpoſe and reſo
lution of their minds. This our Saviour
makes the great mark of a true Diſciple,
if any man (ſaith he) *will be my Diſciple*

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t him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, d follow me. This is a certain ſign, that en have *received the word into good round*, and are well *rooted* in their eligion, when they are not ſhaken by eſe fierce aſſaults; *for many* (as our viour tells us) *hear the word, and with y receive it; but having not root in them- ves, they endure but for a while, and hen perſecution, or tribulation ariſeth, cauſe of the word, preſently they are of- nded*; nay ſome, when they ſee perſe- tion coming at a diſtance, wheel off d bethink themſelves of making their treat in time, and of *agreeing with their verſary, whilſt he is yet in the way.* So that conſtancy to our Religion in ſe of danger, and ſuffering for it, is the ſt proof of our ſincerity. This is *the ry tryal*, as the Scripture calls it, which ill try what materials we are made of, d whether we love God and his truth ſincerity.

And thus I have conſidered ſincerity it reſpects God, and imports true Pie- and Religion towards him; and I roceed to the *ſecond* conſideration.

II. Of

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II. Of ſincerity as it regards Men; and ſo it ſignifies a ſimplicity of mind and manners in our converſation, and carriage one towards another; ſingleneſs of Heart, diſcovering it ſelf in a conſtant plainneſs and honeſt openneſs of behaviour, free from all inſidious devices, and little tricks, and fetches of Craft and Cunning; from all falſe appearances and deceitful diſguiſes of our ſelves in word or action; or yet more plainly, it is to ſpeak as we think, and do what we pretend and profeſs, to perform and make good what we promiſe, and, in a word, really to be, what we would ſeem and appear to be.

Not that we are obliged to tell every Man all our mind; but we are never to declare any thing contrary to it: we may be ſilent, and conceal as much of our ſelves, as prudence, or any other good reaſon requires; but we muſt not put on a diſguiſe, and make a falſe appearance and empty ſhow of what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this Vertue is (I fear) moſt of that complement, which is current in converſation, and which for the moſt part is nothing but words, to fill up the

Gap

Gaps, and ſupply the emptineſs of Diſ-
; an courſe; and a pretence to that kindneſs Serm. I.
l an and eſteem for perſons, which either in
carri truth we have not, or not to that de-
eſs o gree which our expreſſions ſeem to im-
ſtan port; which if done with deſign, is that
havi which we call Flattery, a very odious
d kit ſort of Inſincerity, and ſo much the
Cun worſe, becauſe it abuſeth Men into a
d de vain, and fooliſh opinion of themſelves,
wor and an ill-grounded confidence of the
is t kindneſs and good-will of others to-
pre wards them; and ſo much the more
mak dangerous, becauſe it hath a party with-
vord n us, which is ready to let it in; it plays
n an pon our ſelf-love, which greedily catch-
eth at any thing that tends to magnifie
eve and advance us; for God knows, we are
neve ll too apt to think and make the beſt
t: w of our bad ſelves, ſo that very few
ch o Tempers have Wiſdom and firmneſs e-
othe ough to be proof againſt Flattery; it
ſt no equires great Conſideration, and a re-
e ap oluteModeſty and Humility, to reſiſt the
e an nſinuations of this Serpent; yea, a little
trar udeneſs and moroſeneſs of Nature, a
tha rudent diſtruſt and infidelity in Man-
con ind, to make a Man in good earneſt to
pa ject and deſpiſe it.
o th
Gap

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Inſincerity is mean in it ſelf, having falſ
hood at the bottom; it is alſo often mad
uſe of, to the prejudice of others, i
their Rights and Intereſts. For not on
Diſſimulation is contrary to Sincerit
becauſe it conſiſts in a vain ſhew of wh
we are not, in a falſe muſter of our Vi
tues and good Qualities, in a deceitf
repreſentation and undue Character
our Lives: but there are likewiſe othe
Qualities and Actions more inconſiſte
with Integrity, which are of a more i
jurious and miſchievous conſequence
our nature, as falſhood, and fraud, an
perfidiouſneſs, and infinite little Craf
and Arts of deceit, which Men practi
upon one another in their ordinary co
verſation and intercourſe. The former
great vanity: but this is groſs iniquity

And yet theſe Qualities dexterou
managed, ſo as not to lie too plain a
open to diſcovery, are look'd upon
many, as ſigns of great depth and ſhrew
neſs, admirable inſtruments of buſine
and neceſſary means for the compaſſi
our own ends and deſigns; and thou
in thoſe that have ſuffered by them, a
felt the miſchief of them, they are
ways accounted diſhoneſt, yet amo

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the generality of lookers on, they paſs for great policy; as if the very skill of governing and managing human affairs, did conſiſt in theſe little tricks and devices: But he that looks more narrowly into them, and will but have the patience to obſerve the end of them, will find them to be great follies, and that it is only for want of true wiſdom and underſtanding, that Men *turn aſide to tricks*, and *make diſſimulation and lies their refuge*. It is *Solomon*'s Obſervation, That *he that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely; but the folly of Fools is deceit*; *the folly of Fools*, that is, the moſt egregious piece of folly that any Man can be guilty of, is to play the Knave; the vulgar Tranſlation renders this clauſe a little otherwiſe, but yet towards the ſame ſenſe, *Sed ſtultus divertit ad dolos*, *but the Fool turns aſide to tricks*; to make uſe of theſe, is a ſign the Man wants underſtanding to ſee the plain and direct way to his end. I will not deny but theſe little Arts may ſerve a preſent turn, and perhaps ſucceſsfully enough: but true Wiſdom goes deep, and reacheth a great way further, looking to the end of things, and regarding the future as well as the preſent, and by judging upon the whole matter and ſum

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of affairs, doth clearly discern, that Craft and Cunning are only useful for the present occasion; whereas integrity is of lasting use, and will be serviceable to us upon all occasions, and in the whole course of our Lives; and that Dissimulation and Deceit, though they may do some present execution in business, yet they recoil upon a Man terribly afterwards, so as to make him stagger, and by degrees to weaken, and at last to destroy his Reputation, which is a much more useful and substantial and lasting instrument of prosperity and success in humane affairs than any tricks and devices whatsoever. Thus have I considered this great virtue of Sincerity, both as it regards God, and the mutual conversation and intercourse of Men one with another.

And now having explained the nature of Sincerity to God and Man, by declaring the properties of it, and in what instances we ought chiefly to practise it, and what things are contrary to it; there which remains, is to perswade Men to endeavour after this excellent quality, and to practise it in all the words and actions of their Lives.

Let us then in the firſt place be ſincere in our Religion, and ſerve God in truth and uprightneſs of heart, out of Conſcience of our Duty and Obligations to him, and not with ſiniſter reſpects to our private intereſt or paſſion, to the publick approbation or cenſure of Men. Let us never make uſe of Religion to ſerve any baſe and unworthy ends, cloaking our deſigns of Covetouſneſs, or Ambition, or Revenge, with pretences of Conſcience and Zeal for God; and let us endeavour after the reality of Religion, always remembring that a ſincere Piety doth not conſiſt in ſhew, but ſubſtance, not in appearance, but in effect; that the Spirit of true Religion is ſtill and calm, charitable and peaceable, making as little ſhew and ſtir as is poſſible; that a truly and ſincerely good Man does not affect vain oſtentation, and an unſeaſonable diſcovery of his good Qualities, but endeavours rather really to be, than to ſeem Religious, and of the two rather ſeeks to conceal his Piety, than to ſet it out with pomp; gives his Alms privately, prays to God in ſecret, and makes no appearance of Religion, but in ſuch fruits and effects as cannot be hid, in the quiet and ſilent virtues of Humility, and Meek- Serm. 1.

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neſs, and Patience, of Peace and Charity, be in governing his Paſſions, and taking heed not to offend with his Tongue, by ſlander and calumny, by envious detraction or raſh cenſure, or by any word or action that may be to the hurt and prejudice of his Neighbour: But on the contrary, it is a very ill ſign, if a Man affect to make a great noiſe and buſtle about Religion, if he blow a Trumpet before his good Works, and by extraordinary ſhews of Devotion ſummon the Eyes of Men to behold him, and do, as it were, call aloud to them to take notice of his Piety, and to *come to ſee his zeal for the Lord of Hoſts.* It is not impoſſible but ſuch a Man with all his vanity and oſtentation may have ſome real goodneſs in him; but he is *as the Hypocrites are*, and does as like one as is poſſible; and by the mighty ſhew that he makes, to wiſe and conſiderate Men, greatly brings in queſtion the ſincerity of his Religion.

And with the ſincerity of our Piety towards God, let us joyn the ſimplicity and integrity of Manners in our Converſation with Men. Let us ſtrictly charge our ſelves to uſe truth and plainneſs in all our words and doings; let our Tongue be

ity, be ever the true Interpreter of our
ing Mind, and our Expreſſions the lively
by Image of our Thoughts and Affections,
tra- and our outward actions exactly agree-
ord able to our inward purpoſes and inten-
and tions.

the Amongſt too many other inſtances of
af- the great corruption and degeneracy of
e a- the Age wherein we live, the great and
be- general want of ſincerity in Converſati-
di- on is none of the leaſt. The World is
the grown ſo full of Diſſimulation and Com-
is it plement, that Mens words are hardly
tice any ſignification of their thoughts; and if
zeal any Man meaſure his words by his heart,
ſſi- and ſpeak as he thinks, and do not ex-
ity preſs more kindneſs to every man, than
real men uſually have for any man, he can
po- hardly eſcape the cenſure of rudeneſs and
oſ- want of breeding. The old *Engliſh* plain-
he neſs and ſincerity, that generous integri-
en, ty of Nature and honeſty of Diſpoſition,
ity which always argues true greatneſs of
mind, and is uſually accompanied with
ety undaunted courage and reſolution, is in
ity a great meaſure loſt amongſt us; there
er- hath been a long endeavour to transform
rge us into foreign Manners and Faſhions,
all and to bring us to a ſervile imitation of
gue none of the beſt of our Neighbours, in
be

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ſome of the worſt of their Qualities. The Dialect of Converſation is now a days ſo ſwell'd with Vanity and Compliment, and ſo ſurfeited (as I may ſay) of expreſſions of kindneſs and reſpect, that if a man that lived an Age or two ago ſhould return into the World again, he would really want a Dictionary to help him to underſtand his own Language and to know the true intrinſick value of the phraſe in faſhion, and would hardly at firſt believe at what a low rate the higheſt ſtrains and expreſſions of kindneſs imaginable do commonly paſs in currant payment; and when he ſhould come to underſtand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himſelf with a good Countenance and a good Conſcience to converſe with Men upon equal terms and in their own way.

And in truth it is hard to ſay whether it ſhould more provoke our contempt or our pity, to hear what ſolemn expreſſions of reſpect and kindneſs will paſs between men, almoſt upon no occaſion; how great honour and eſteem they will declare for one whom perhaps they never heard of or ſaw before, and how entirely they are all on the ſudden devoted to his ſervice and intereſt for no reaſon; how infinitely

infinitely and eternally obliged to him for no benefit, and how extremely they will be concerned for him, yea, and afflicted too for no cauſe. I know it is ſad in juſtification of this hollow kind of Converſation, that there is no harm, no real deceit in Complement, but the matter is well enough, ſo long as we underſtand one another, *Et verba valent ut Nummi, Words are like Money*, and when the currant value of them is generally underſtood, no Man is cheated by them. This is ſomething, if ſuch words were any thing; but being brought into the Account, they are meer Cyphers. However it is ſtill a juſt matter of complaint, that ſincerity and plainneſs are out of faſhion, and that our Language is running into a Lye; that Men have almoſt quite perverted the uſe of Speech, and made words to ſignifie nothing; that the greateſt part of the Converſation of Mankind, and of their intercourſe with one another, is little elſe but driving a Trade of Diſſimulation; inſomuch that it would make a Man heartily ſick and weary of the World, to ſee the little ſincerity that is in uſe, and practice among Men, and tempt him to break out into that melancholy Complaint and Wiſh of the

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the Prophet, Jer. 9. *O that I had in the Wilderneſs a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people and go from them; for they are all Adulterers, and an aſſembly of treacherous Men; and they bend their tongue like their bow for lies, but have no courage for the truth upon earth. Take ye heed every one of his Neighbour, and truſt ye not in any Brother; for every Brother will utterly ſupplant, and every Neighbour will walk with ſlanders. Thine habitation is in the midſt of deceit; one ſpeaketh peaceably to his Neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait. Shall not I viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged of ſuch a Nation as this?*

Such were the Manners of the people of *Iſrael* at that time, which were both the forerunner and the cauſe of thoſe terrible Calamities which befell them afterwards; and this Character agrees but too well to the preſent Age, which is ſo wretchedly void of Truth and Sincerity; for which reaſon there is the greater need to recommend this Virtue to us, which ſeems to be fled from us, that *truth and righteouſneſs may return, and glory may dwell in our land, and God may ſhew his mercy upon us, and grant us*

us his Salvation, and Righteouſneſs and Peace may kiſs each other. To this end give me leave to offer theſe following Conſiderations. Serm. 1.

Firſt, That Sincerity is the higheſt commendation, and the very beſt Character, that can be given of any man; it is the ſolid foundation of all Virtue, the Heart and Soul of all Piety and Goodneſs; it is in Scripture called *perfection*, and frequently joyned with it; and throughout the Bible, there is the greateſt ſtreſs and weight laid upon it; it is ſpoken of as the ſum and comprehenſion of all Religion. *Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and truth*, ſays *Joſhua* to the People of *Iſrael*, Joſ. 24. 14. God takes great pleaſure in it; ſo *David* aſſures us, 1 *Chron.* 29. 17. *I know, my God, that thou tryeſt the Heart, and haſt pleaſure in uprightneſs:* And again, *Thou loveſt truth in the inward parts.*

To this diſpoſition of mind the promiſes of divine favour and bleſſing are particularly made, *Pſal.* 15. 1, 2. *Lord who ſhall dwell in thy Tabernacle? who ſhall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh*

Vol. I. *ſpeaketh the truth from his Heart.* Pſal. 32. 2. *Bleſſed is the Man, unto whom the Lord imputeth no ſin, and in whoſe Spirit there is no guile.*

And 'tis obſervable that this Character of our Saviour here given of *Nathanael*, is the only full and perfect commendation that we read was ever given by him of any particular perſon. He commends ſome particular acts of Piety and Virtue in others, as St. *Peter*'s confeſſion of him, the Faith of the *Centurion*, and of the Woman that was healed by touching the Hem of his Garment, the Charity of the Woman that caſt her two Mites into the Treaſury, and the Bounty of that other devout Woman who poured upon him a Box of precious Oyntment: But here he gives the particular Character of a good Man, when he ſays of *Nathanael*, that he was an *Iſraelite indeed, in whom was no Guile.* And the Apoſtle mentions this quality, as the chief ingredient into the Character of the beſt Man that ever was, our bleſſed Saviour, *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his mouth.*

Secondly, The rarity of this Virtue is a farther commendation of it. A ſincerely

cerely pious and good Man, without any guile or disguise, is not a sight to be seen every day. Our Saviour in the Text speaks of it, as a thing very extraordinary and of special remark and observation, and breaks out into some kind of wonder upon the occasion, as if to see a Man of perfect integrity and simplicity were an occurrence very rare and unusual, and such as calls for our more especial attention and regard, *Behold* (saith he) *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile.*

Thirdly, the want of Sincerity will quite spoil the virtue and acceptance of all our Piety and Obedience, and certainly deprive us of the reward of it. All that we do in the service of God, all our external obedience to his Laws, if not animated by Sincerity, is like a Sacrifice without a Heart, which is an abomination to the Lord.

Fourthly, Hypocrisy and Insincerity is a very vain and foolish thing; it is designed to cheat others, but is in truth a deceiving of our selves. No Man would flatter or dissemble, did he believe he were seen and discover'd; an open Knave is

is a great Fool, who deſtroys at one both his deſign and his Reputation: and this is the caſe of every Hypocrite; all the diſagreement which is between his Tongue and his Thoughts, his Actions and his Heart, is open to that Eye, from which nothing can be hid; for *the ways of Man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ſeeth all his goings; there is no darkneſs nor ſhadow of Death, where the workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves.*

Fifthly, Truth and Reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the ſhew of any thing be good for any thing, I am ſure Sincerity is better; for why does any man diſſemble, or ſeem to be that which he is not, but becauſe he thinks it good to have ſuch a quality as he pretends to? for to counterfeit and diſſemble, is to put on the appearance of ſome real excellency. Now the beſt way in the world for a man to ſeem to be any thing, is really to be what he would ſeem to be. Beſides, that it is many times as troubleſome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one, but he is diſcovered to want it, and then all his pains

and labour to ſeem to have it is loſt. There is ſomething unnatural in Painting, which a skilful Eye will eaſily diſcern from Native Beauty and Complexion. Serm. 1.

It is hard to perſonate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, Nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray her ſelf one time or other. Therefore if any man think it convenient to ſeem Good, let him be ſo indeed, and then his Goodneſs will appear to every body's ſatisfaction; for Truth is convincing, and carries it's own light and evidence along with it, and will not only commend us to every Man's Conſcience, but, which is much more, to God, who ſearcheth and ſeeth our Hearts; ſo that upon all accounts Sincerity is true Wiſdom. Particularly as to the affairs of this World, integrity hath many advantages over all the fine and artificial ways of Diſſimulation and Deceit; it is much the plainer and eaſier, much the ſafer and more ſecure way of dealing in the world; it hath leſs of trouble and difficulty, of entanglement and perplexity, of danger and hazard in it; it is the ſhorteſt and neareſt way to our end, carrying

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us thither in a ſtraight line, and will hold out and laſt longeſt. The Arts of Deceit and Cunning do continually grow weaker and leſs effectual and ſerviceable to them that uſe them; whereas Integrity gains ſtrength by uſe, and the more and longer any Man practiſeth it, the greater ſervice it does him, by confirming his Reputation, and encouraging thoſe with whom he hath to do, to repoſe the greater Truſt and Confidence in him, which is an unſpeakable advantage in the buſineſs and affairs of life.

But a Diſſembler muſt always be upon his guard, and watch himſelf carefully that he doth not contradict his own pretence; for he acts an unnatural part, and therefore muſt put a continual force and reſtraint upon himſelf. Truth always lies uppermoſt, and if a Man do not carefully attend, he will be apt to bolt it out whereas he that acts ſincerely, hath the eaſieſt task in the world; becauſe he follows Nature, and ſo is put to no trouble and care about his words and actions; he needs not invent any pretence before-hand, nor make excuſes afterwards, for anything he hath ſaid or done.

But Inſincerity is very troubleſome to manage; a Man hath ſo many things to

hol attend to, ſo many ends to bring together,
ceits make his life a very perplext and in-
vea ricate thing. *Oportet mendacem eſſe memo-*
e te *m*, *A lyar had need have a good memo-*
rit , leſt he contradict at one time what he
an id at another: but Truth is always con-
ate ſtent with it ſelf, and needs nothing
Re o help it out; it is always near at
vit and, and ſits upon our Lips, and is rea-
eat y to drop out before we are aware;
nic whereas a Lye is troubleſome, and ſets a
puſ ians invention upon the Rack, and one
ick needs a great many more to make
por good. It is like building upon a falſe
ill foundation, which continually ſtands in
pre ed of props to ſhoar it up, and proves
an laſt more chargeable, than to have
an iſed a ſubſtantial Building at firſt upon
lie true and ſolid Foundation; for Sincer-
ful is firm and ſubſtantial, and there is no-
out hing hollow and unſound in it, and
the cauſe it is plain and open, fears no diſ-
e ho very, of which the Crafty Man is al-
rou ays in danger, and when he thinks he
act alks in the dark, all his pretences are
nce tranſparent, that he that runs may
ften ad them; he is the laſt Man that finds
ond mſelf to be found out, and whilſt he
he tkes it for granted that he makes Fools
gs t others, he renders himſelf ridiculous.
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Add to all this, that Sincerity is the most compendious Wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the speedy dispatch of Business; it creates confidence in those we have to deal with, saves the labour of many enquiries, and brings things to a plain issue in few words: It is like travelling in a plain beaten Road, which commonly brings a Man sooner to his Journeys end than By-ways, in which Men often lose themselves. In a word, whatsoever convenience may be thought to be in falshood and dissimulation, it is soon over; but the inconvenience of it is perpetual, because it brings a Man under an everlasting jealousie and suspicion, so that he is not believed when he speaks truth, nor trusted when perhaps he means honestly. When a Man hath once forfeited the reputation of his integrity, he is set fast, and nothing will then serve his turn neither Truth nor Falshood.

And I have often thought, that God hath in great Wisdom hid from Men false and dishonest minds the wonderful advantages of Truth and Integrity to the prosperity even of our worldly Affairs: these Men are so blinded by their Covetousness and Ambition, that they cannot look beyond a present advantage, and forbear

no forbear to ſeize upon it, tho by ways ne-
lenver ſo indirect; they cannot ſee ſo far,
f Bias to the remote conſequences of a ſteady
e integrity, and the vaſt benefit and advan-
ır tages which it will bring a Man at laſt.
o a Were but this ſort of Men wiſe and clear-
ng ſighted enough to diſcern this, they would
on be honeſt, out of very Knavery, not out
s en of any love to Honeſty and Virtue, but
n lo with a crafty deſign to promote and ad-
on vance more effectually their own Inte-
honeſts; and therefore the Juſtice of the Di-
; vine Providence hath hid this trueſt
l, point of Wiſdom from their Eyes, that
erla bad men might not be upon equal
he terms with the Juſt and Upright, and
h, serve their own wicked Deſigns by ho-
neſteſt and lawful means.

d t Indeed, if a man were only to deal in the
et fa world for a day, and ſhould never have
tu ccaſion to converſe more with Mankind,
never more need their good opinion, or
t G ood Word, it were then no great matter
Men (ſpeaking as to the concernments of this
der world) if a man ſpent his Reputation all
to t once, and ventured it at one throw:
ffai ut if he be to continue in the world, and
Co ould have the advantage of Converſa-
can on whilſt he is in it, let him make uſe of
e, truth and Sincerity in all his Words and
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Actions, for nothing but this will last and hold out to the end; all other Arts will fail, but Truth and Integrity will carry a man through, and bear him out to the last.

'Tis the Observation of *Solomon*, Prov. 12. 19. *The lip of Truth is established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* And the wiser any man is, the more clearly will he discern, how serviceable Sincerity is to all the great ends and purposes of humane life; and that man hath made a good progress, and profited much in the School of Wisdom, who valueth Truth and Sincerity according to their worth. Every man will readily grant them to be great Virtues, and Arguments of a generous mind, but that there is so much of true Wisdom in them, and that they really serve to profit our interest in this World, seems a great Paradox to the generality of Men; and yet I doubt not but it is undoubtedly true, and generally found to be so, in the experience of Mankind.

Lastly, Consider that it is not worth our while to dissemble, considering the shortness and especially the uncertainty of our Lives. To what purpose should we be so cunning, when our abode in this

world is so short and uncertain? Why should any Man by dissembling his Judgment, or acting contrary to it, incur at once the displeasure of God, and the discontent of his own mind? Especially if we consider, that all our Dissimulation shall one day be made manifest and published on the open Theatre of the World, before God, Angels and Men, to our everlasting shame and confusion; all Disguise and Vizards shall then be pluckt off, and every man shall appear in his true Colours. For then *the secrets of Men shall be judged*, and *God will bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil. Nothing is now covered, which shall not then be revealed, nor hid which shall not then be known.*

Let us then be now what we would be glad to be found in that day, when all pretences shall be examined, and the closest Hypocrisie of Men shall be laid open and dasht out of Countenance; when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed, and all the hidden Works of Darkness shall be revealed, and all our Thoughts, Words and Actions shall be brought to a strict and severe Tryal, and be censured by that impartial and infalli-

Vol. I. ble Judgment of God, which is accord-
ing to Truth; *In the day when God sh*
judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Chri

To whom, with the Father and t
Holy Ghost, be Glory now and f
ever. Amen.

SERMO

SERMON II.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL

MDCLXXXVI.

Before the

Princeſs ANN.

The Excellency of *Abraham*'s Faith and Obedience.

HEB. XI. 17, 18, 19.

By Faith Abraham *when he was tryed offered up* Iſaac: *and he that had received the Promiſes offered up his only begotten Son: of whom it was ſaid, That in* Iſaac *ſhall thy ſeed be called: accounting that God was able to raiſe him up, even from the Dead; from whence alſo he received him in a Figure.*

THE deſign of this Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* is to recommend to them the Chriſtian Religion, to which

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they were but newly Converted, and t
encourage them to constancy in the pro
fession of it, notwithstanding the Suffe
ings which attended it. He sets befo
them in this Chapter several Example
in the Old Testament of those, who, th
they were under a much more imperfe
dispensation, yet by a stedfast belief i
God and his Promises, had performe
such wonderful Acts of Obedience an
Self-denyal.

He begins with the Patriarchs befo
the Flood; but insists chiefly upon th
examples of two eminent Persons of the
own Nation, as neareſt to them, and mo
likely to prevail upon them, the Exam
ples of *Abraham* and *Moses*, the one th
Father of their Nation, the other the
great Law-giver, and both of them th
greatest Patterns of Faith, and Obedien
and Self-denyal, that the History of a
former Ages, from the beginning of th
World, had afforded.

I shall at this time, by Gods assistanc
treat of the first of these, the Exampl
of *Abraham*, the Constancy of whos
Faith, and the chearfulness of whose O
bedience, even in the difficultest Cases,
so remarkable above all the other Ex
amples mentioned in this Chapter. Fo

at the Command of God, he left his Kindred and his Country, not knowing whither he ſhould go, by which eminent Act of Obedience, he declared himſelf to be wholly at God's Diſpoſal, and ready to follow him: But this was no Tryal in compariſon of that here in my Text, when God commanded him *to offer up his only Son*: But ſuch was the immutable ſtedfaſtneſs of his Faith, and the perfect ſubmiſſion of his Obedience, that it does not appear that he made the leaſt check at it; but out of perfect Reverence and Obedience to the Authority of the divine Command, he went about it as readily and chearfully, as if God had bid him do ſome ſmall thing: *By Faith* Abraham *when he was tryed offered up* Iſaac.

For the explication of which Words, it will be requiſite to conſider *two* things.

Firſt, The Tryal or Temptation in general.

Secondly, the Excellency of *Abraham's* Faith and Obedience upon this Tryal.

Firſt, The Tryal or Temptation in general: It is ſaid that *Abraham when he was tryed*, the word is πειραζομενος, *being Tempted*: That is, God intending to

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to make Tryal of his Faith and Obedience; and ſo it is expreſt *Gen.* 22. 1. where it is ſaid, that *God did tempt Abraham, and ſaid unto him, take now thy Son, thine only Son.*

Now there are two difficulties concerning this matter. It ſeems contrary to Scripture, that God ſhould Tempt any Man; and contrary to Reaſon; becauſe God who knows what every Man will do, needed not to make Tryal of any Man's Faith or Obedience.

Firſt, It ſeems contrary to Scripture, which ſays, *God Tempts no Man*: and 'tis moſt true, that God Tempts no Man with a deſign to draw him into Sin; but this doth not hinder, but he may try their Faith and Obedience with great difficulties, to make them the more illuſtrious. Thus God Tempted *Abraham*; and he permitted *Job*, and even our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf to be thus Tempted.

Secondly, It ſeems contrary to Reaſon that God, who knows what any Man will do in any Circumſtances, ſhould go to make Tryal of it. But God does not try Men for his own information; but to give an illuſtrious Proof and Example to others of Faith and Obedience: And tho after this Tryal of *Abraham*, God ſays

ſays to him, *Now I know that thou loveſt me, becauſe thou haſt not with-held thy Son, thine only Son from me*; Yet we are to underſtand this as ſpoken after the manner of Men; as God elſewhere ſpeaks to *Abraham* concerning *Sodom*; *I will go down now to ſee whether they have done altogether according to the cry which is come up unto me; and if not, I will know.* Serm. 2.

I proceed to the *Second* thing I propoſed, The Excellency of *Abraham*'s Faith and Obedience upon this Tryal: *By Faith Abraham when he was tryed offered up Iſaac.* God accepts of it, as if he had done it; becauſe he had done it in part, and was ready to have performed the reſt, if God had not countermanded him.

And this act of Faith and Obedience in *Abraham* will appear the more illuſtrious, if we conſider theſe *three* things.

I. The firmneſs and ſtedfaſtneſs of his Faith, notwithſtanding the objections againſt it.

II. The conſtancy of his Reſolution, notwithſtanding the difficulty of the thing.

III. The

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III. The reaſonableneſs of his Faith, in that he gave ſatisfaction to himſelf in ſo hard and perplext a Caſe.

I. The firmneſs and ſtedfaſtneſs of his Faith will appear, if we conſider what objections there were in the caſe, enough to ſhake a very ſtrong Faith. There were three great objections againſt this Command, and ſuch as might in reaſon make a wiſe and good Man doubtful whether this Command were from God.

The horrid nature of the thing commanded.

The grievous ſcandal that might ſeem almoſt unavoidably to follow upon it.

And the horrible conſequence of it, which ſeemed to make the former promiſe of God to *Abraham* void.

Firſt, The horrid nature of the thing commanded, which was for a Father to kill his own Child. This muſt needs appear very barbarous and unnatural, and look liker a Sacrifice to an Idol, than to the true God.

It ſeemed to be againſt the Law of Nature, and directly contrary to that kindneſs and affection which God himſelf had planted in the hearts of Parents towards their Children.

And

And there is no affection more natural and ſtrong than this; for there are many perſons that would redeem the Lives of their Children with the hazard of their own. Now that God hath planted ſuch an affection in Nature, is an argument that it is good, and therefore it could not but ſeem ſtrange that he ſhould command any thing contrary to it: And in this caſe, there were two circumſtances that increaſed the horrour of the fact; That his Son was innocent; and that he was to ſlay him with his own hands. Serm. 2.

1. That his Son was innocent. It would grieve the heart of any Father to give up his Son to Death, tho he were never ſo undutiful and diſobedient.

So paſſionately was *David* affected with the death of his Son *Abſolom*, as to wiſh he had died for him, tho he dyed in the very act of Rebellion, and tho the ſaving of his Life had been inconſiſtent with the Peace of his Government.

How deep then muſt it ſink into the heart of a Father, to give up his innocent Son to death? And ſuch a Son was *Iſaac*, for any thing appeared to the contrary. God himſelf gave him this teſtimony

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ſtimony, that he was *the Son whom his Father loved*, and there is no intimation of any thing to the contrary. Now this could not but appear ſtrange to a good Man, that God ſhould command an innocent perſon to be put to death. But,

2. That a Father ſhould be commanded, not only to give up his Son to death but to ſlay him with his own Hands; not only to be a Spectator, but to be the Actor in this Tragedy. What Father would not ſhrink, and ſtart back at ſuch a Command? What good Man, eſpecially in ſuch a caſe, and where Nature was ſo hard preſt, would not have been apt to have looked upon ſuch a Revelation as this, rather as the ſuggeſtion and illuſion of an evil Spirit, than a Command of God? And yet *Abraham's* Faith was not ſtaggered, ſo as to call this Revelation of God in queſtion.

Secondly, The grievous ſcandal that might ſeem almoſt unavoidably to follow upon it, was another great objection againſt it. The report of ſuch an action would in all appearance blemiſh the reputation, even of ſo good a Man, amongſt all ſober and conſiderate perſons,

ſons, who could hardly forbear to cenſure him, as a wicked and unnatural Man.

And this was a hard caſe, for a Man to be put to Sacrifice at once two of the deareſt things in the world, his Reputation and his Son: Nor could he have eaſily defended himſelf from this imputation, by alledging an expreſs Revelation and Command of God for it; for who would give credit to it?

A Revelation to another Man is nothing to me, unleſs I be aſſured that he had ſuch a Revelation, which I cannot be, but either by another immediate Revelation, or by ſome Miracle to confirm it.

The act had an appearance of ſo much horrour, that it was not eaſily credible that God ſhould command it; and if every Mans confident pretence to revelation be admitted, the worſt actions may plead this in their excuſe. So that this pretence would have been ſo far from excuſing his fault, that it muſt rather have been eſteemed a high aggravation of it, by adding the boldeſt Impiety to the moſt barbarous Inhumanity.

But *Abraham* was not ſtumbled at this, nor at the advantage which the Enemies of his Religion would make of ſuch

ſuch an occaſion, who would be ready to ſay, *Here is your excellent good Man, and likely to be a Friend of God, who was ſo cruel an Enemy to his own Son!* All this 'tis probable he might conſider: but it did not move him, being reſolved to obey God, and to leave it to his Wiſdom to provide againſt all the inconveniences that might follow upon it.

Thirdly, The ſtrongeſt Objection of all was the horrible conſequence of the thing, which ſeemed to claſh with former Revelations, and to make void the promiſe which God had before made to *Abraham*, *That in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*, which promiſe was expreſly limited to *Iſaac* and his Poſterity, who had then no Son.

And of this difficulty the Apoſtle takes expreſs notice in the Text, that *He that had received the promiſes* (that is, was perſuaded of the truth and faithfulneſs of them) *offered up his only begotten Son, of whom is was ſaid, That in* Iſaac *ſhall thy Seed be called.*

And this Objection is really ſo ſtrong, that if *Abraham* could not have given himſelf ſatisfaction about it, he might juſtly

juſtly have queſtioned the truth of the Revelation. For no Man can poſſibly entertain two contradictory Revelations as from God, but he muſt of neceſſity queſtion one or both of them: but ſo ſtrong was *Abraham*'s Faith, as not to be ſhaken by the ſeeming contradiction of theſe two Revelations. Serm. 2.

II. We will conſider the conſtancy of his Reſolution to obey God, notwithſtanding the harſhneſs and difficulty of the thing. Tho *Abraham* were firmly perſuaded, that this Command to kill his Son was really from God; yet it is no eaſie matter for a Man to bring himſelf to obey God in ſo difficult a caſe, and out of meer reverence to the Divine Authority, to diveſt himſelf of his Nature, and to thwart the ſtrongeſt inclinations of it; a Man would be very apt to confer with fleſh and Blood in ſuch a caſe. Let but any Man that knows what it is to be a Father, lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider his own Bowels; and he will be aſtoniſhed at *Abraham*'s Obedience as well as his Faith.

To take *his Son, his only Son, his Son whom he loved*, and in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy Poſteri-

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ty, and with his own hands to deſtro him and all his hopes together! It m be a ſtrong Faith that will engage Man to Obedience in ſo difficult an i ſtance.

There is one circumſtance more eſp cially, which renders *Abraham*'s Obed ence very remarkable; The deliberatene of the action. It had not been ſo muc if ſo ſoon as he had received this Co mand from God, he had upon a ſudde impulſe and tranſport of zeal do this.

But that his Obedience might be t more glorious, and have all the circum ſtances of advantage given to it, G would have it done deliberately, an upon full conſideration; and therefo he bad him go to the Mountain thre daies Journey from the place where h was, and there to offer up his Son.

It is in acts of Virtue and Obedienc as in acts of Sin and Vice; the more d liberate the Sin is, and the more cal and ſedate temper the Man is in whe he commits it, the greater is the fault whereas what is done by ſurprize, in th heat of Temptation or tranſport of Paſſi on, hath ſome excuſe from the ſudden neſs and deliberateneſs of it.

So

So it is in acts of Virtue and Obedience, especially if they be attended with considerable difficulty, the more deliberately they are done, the more virtuous they are, and the greater praise is due to them.

Now that *Abraham*'s Obedience might want nothing to heighten it, God seems on purpose to have put so long a space betwixt the Command and the performance of it; he gives him time to pool upon it, to weigh the command, and to look on every side of this difficult duty; he gives scope for his reason to argue and debate the case, and opportunity for natural affection to play its part, and for flesh and blood to raise all its batteries against the resolution which he had taken up.

And now we may easily imagin, what conflict this good Man had within himself, during those three daies that he was traveling to the Mountain in *Moriah*; and how his heart was ready to be rent in pieces, betwixt his duty to God, and his affection to his Child; so that every step of this unwelcome and wearisome journey, he did as it were lay violent hands upon himself.

He was to offer up his Son but once
but he Sacrificed himself and his ow
Will every moment for three da
together; and when he came thithe
and all things were ready, the Altar, t
Wood, and the Fire, and the Knife,
must needs be a stabbing Question, a
wound him to the Heart, which his I
nocent Son so innocently askt hi
Where is the Lamb, for a Burnt-offe
ing?

It must be a strong Faith indeed, a
a mighty Resolution, that could mak
him to hold out three days against t
violent Assaults of his own Nature, a
the charming Presence of his Son,
nough to melt his Heart, as often as h
cast his Eyes upon him: and yet nothi
of all this, made him to stagger in h
Duty, but *being strong in Faith, he ga*
glory to God, by one of the most mira
culous acts of Obedience that ever wa
exacted from any of the Sons of Men.

III. In the *Third* and last place, I com
to consider the Reasonableness of hi
Faith in that he was able to give satisfacti
on to himself in so intricate and perplex
a case. The constancy of *Abraham*'s Faith
was not an obstinate and stubborn Per
suasion

suasion; but the result of the wisest reasoning, and sobereſt conſideration. Serm. 2.

So the Text says, that *he counted*, the word is λογισαμενος, *he Reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him up from the Dead*; so that he debated the matter with himself, and gave himself satisfaction, concerning the Objections and Difficulties in the case; and being fully satisfied that it was a Divine Command, he resolved to obey it.

As for the *Objections* I have mentioned.

1. The horrid appearance of the thing, that a Father should slay his Innocent Son. Why should *Abraham* scruple the doing this, at the Command of God, who being the Author of Life, hath power over it, and may resume what he hath given, and take away the Life of any of his Creatures when he will, and make whom he pleaseth instruments in the execution of his Command?

It was indeed a hard case, considering natural affection; and therefore God did not permit it to be executed.

But the question of God's Right over the lives of Men; and of his authority to command any Man to be the instru-

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ment of his pleasure in such a case, admits of no dispute.

And tho God hath planted strong affections in Parents towards their Children; yet he hath written no Law in any Man's heart, to the prejudice of his own Soveraign Right. This is a case always excepted, and this takes away the objection of Injustice.

2. As to the scandal of it, *there* could be no great objection in those times, when the absolute power of Parents over their Children was in it's full force, and they might put them to Death without being accountable for it. So that then it was no such startling matter, to hear of a Father putting his Child to Death. Nay, in much later times we find that in the most ancient Laws of the *Romans* (I mean those of the XII. *Tables*) Children are absolutely put in the power of their Parents, to whom is given, *jus vitæ & necis, a power of Life and Death* over them; and likewise to sell them for Slaves.

And tho amongst the *Jews* this paternal power was limited by the Law of *Moses*; and the judgment of Life and Death was taken out of the Fathers hands, except in case of Contumacy and Rebel-

rebellion; (and even in that case the Process was to be before the Elders of the City) yet it is certain, that in elder times the paternal power was more absolute and unaccountable, which takes off much from the horror and scandal of the thing, as it appears now to us who have no such power.

And therefore we do not find in the History, that this Objection did much stick with *Abraham*; it being then no unusual thing for a Father to put his Child to Death upon a just account.

And the Command of God, who hath absolute Dominion over the Lives of his Creatures, is certainly a just reason; and no Man can reasonably scruple the doing of that, upon the Command of God, which he might have done by his own Authority, without being accountable for the Action, to any but God only.

3. As to the Objection from the horrible Consequence of the Thing Commanded, that the Slaying of *Isaac* seemed to overthrow *the Promise, which God had made before to* Abraham, *That in* Isaac *his Seed should be called*, This seems to him to be the great difficulty, and here he makes use of Reason,

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to reconcile the seeming Contradiction of this Command of God, to his former Promise. So the Text tells us, that *he offered up his only begotten Son, of whom it was said, that in* Isaac *shall thy Seed be called; Reasoning that God was able to raise him up from the Dead.* So that tho' *Isaac* were put to Death, yet he saw how the Promise of God might still be made good by his being raised from the Dead, and living afterward to have a numerous Posterity.

There had then indeed been no Instance, or Example of any such thing in the World, as the Resurrection of one from the Dead, which makes *Abraham's* Faith the more wonderful: but he confirmed himself in this Belief, by an Example as near the case as might be. *He Reasoned, that God was able to raise him from the Dead, from whence also he had received him in a Figure.*

This I know is by Interpreters generally understood of *Isaac's* being delivered from the Jaws of Death, when he was laid upon the Altar, and ready to be Slain. But the Text seems not to speak of what happened after; but of something that had passed before, by which *Abraham* confirmed himself in this per-

persuasion, that if he were Slain, God would raise him up again.

And so the words ὁθεν ἐκομίσατο ought to be rendred, in the past time, *from whence also he had received him in a Figure.* So that this Expression plainly refers to the miraculous Birth of *Isaac*, when his Parents were past the Age of having Children; which was little less than a Resurrection from the Dead.

And so the Scripture speaks of it. *Rom.* 4. 17. Abraham *believed God, who quickeneth the Dead, and calleth the things which are not, as if they were; and not being weak in Faith, he considered not his own Body which was Dead*; and a little before the Text, (speaking of the miraculous Birth of *Isaac*) *and therefore sprang there of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the Stars of Heaven.*

From whence (as the Apostle tells us) *Abraham* reasoned thus; That God, who gave him *Isaac* at first in so miraculous a manner, was able by another miracle to restore him to life again, after he was Dead, and to make him the Father of many Nations. *He Reasoned, that God was able to raise him up from the Dead, from whence also he had received him in a Figure.*

Thus

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Thus you ſee the reaſonableneſs of *Abraham*'s Faith; he pitched upon the main difficulty in the Caſe, and he anſwered it, as well as was poſſible: And in his reaſoning about this matter he gives the utmoſt weight to every thing that might tend to vindicate the truth and faithfulneſs of God's Promiſe, and to make the Revelations of God conſiſtent with one another; and this tho' he had a great Intereſt and a very tender concernment of his own, to have biaſſed him.

For he might have argued with great appearance and probability the other way: But as every Pious and Good Man ſhould do, he reaſoned on God's ſide, and favoured that part. Rather than diſobey a Command of God, or believe that his promiſe ſhould be fruſtrate, he will believe any thing that is credible and poſſible, how improbable ſoever. Thus far Faith will go; but no farther. From the believing of plain Contradictions and Impoſſibilities, it always deſires to be excuſed.

Thus much for explication of the Words; which I hope hath not been altogether unprofitable, becauſe it tends to clear a point which hath ſomething of difficulty and obſcurity in it, and to vindi-

vindicate the Holy Scripture, and the Divine Revelation therein contained, from one of the moſt ſpecious Objections of Infidelity, Serm. 2.

But I had a farther deſign in this Text; and that is to make ſome *Obſervations* and *Inferences* from it, that may be of uſe to us. As,

Firſt, That Humane Nature is capable of clear and full ſatisfaction, concerning a Divine Revelation. For if *Abraham* had not been fully and paſt all doubt aſſured, that this was a Command from God; he would certainly have ſpared his Son. And nothing is more reaſonable, than to believe that thoſe, to whom God is pleaſed to make immediate Revelations of his Will, are ſome way or other aſſured that they are Divine; otherwiſe they would be in vain, and to no purpoſe.

But how Men are aſſured concerning Divine Revelations made to them, is not ſo eaſie to make out to others: Only theſe two things we are ſure of.

1. That God can work in the Mind of Man, a firm perſuaſion of the Truth of what he Reveals, and that ſuch a Revelation is from him. This no Man can doubt of, that conſiders the great

Vol. I. great power and influence which God who made us, and perfectly knows our Frame, muſt needs have upon our Minds and Underſtandings.

2. That God never offers any thing to any Man's belief, that plainly contradicts the Natural and Eſſential Notions of his Mind. Becauſe this would be for God to deſtroy his own Workmanſhip, and to impoſe that upon the underſtanding of Man, which whilſt it remains what it is, it cannot poſſibly admit.

For inſtance, We cannot imagin, that God ſhould reveal to any Man any thing, that plainly contradicts the Eſſential Perfections of the Divine Nature: for ſuch a Revelation can no more be ſuppoſed to be from God, than a Revelation from God, that there is no God; which is a downright Contradiction.

Now to apply this to the Revelation, which God made to *Abraham* concerning the Sacrificing of his Son. This was made to him by an audible Voice, and he was fully ſatisfied by the Evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from God.

For

Serm. 2.

For this was not the first of many Revelations that had been made to him, so that he knew the manner of them, and had found by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and upon this experience, was grown to a great Confidence in the Truth and Goodness of God. And it is very probable, the first time God appeared to *Abraham*, because it was a new thing, that to make way for the credit of future Revelations, God did shew himself to him in so glorious a manner, as was abundantly to his Conviction.

And this St. *Stephen* does seem to intimate *Acts* 7. 2. *The God of glory appeared to our Father* Abraham *when he was in* Mesopotamia. Now by this glorious Appearance of God to him at first, he was so prepared for the Entertainment of after Revelations, that he was not staggered even at this, concerning the Sacrificing of his Son, being both by the manner of it, and the assurance that accompanied it, fully satisfied that it was from God.

Secondly, I observe from hence the great and necessary use of Reason, in matters of Faith. For we see here that *Abra-*

Vol. I. *Abraham*'s Reason was a mighty strengthning and help to his Faith. Here were two Revelations made to *Abraham*, which seemed to clash with one another; and if *Abraham*'s Reason could not have reconciled the Repugnancy of them, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from God; because this natural Notion, or Principle, that *God cannot contradict himself*, every Man does first, and more firmly believe, than any Revelation whatsoever.

Now *Abraham*'s Reason relieved him in this strait. So the Text expresly tells us, that *he reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him from the Dead.*

And this being admitted, the Command of God, concerning the Slaying of *Isaac*, was very well consistent with his former Promise, That *in Isaac his Seed should be called.*

I know there hath a very rude clamour been raised by some persons, (but of more Zeal I think than Judgment) against the use of Reason in matters of Faith: but how very unreasonable this is, will appear to any one that will but have patience to consider these following particulars.

† 1. The

Serm. 2.

1. The nature of Divine Revelation; That it doth not endow Men with new Faculties; but propoundeth new Objects to the Faculties, which they had before. Reason is the Faculty whereby Revelation is to be discerned; for when God reveals any thing to us, he reveals it to our Understanding, and by that we are to judge of it. Therefore St. *John* cautions us, 1 *Joh.* 4. 1. *Not to believe every spirit; but to try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the World*; that is, there are many that falsly pretend to Inspiration: But how can these pretenders be tryed and discerned from those that are truly inspired, but by using our Reason, in comparing the evidence for the one and the other?

2. This will farther appear, if we consider the nature of Faith. Faith (as we are now speaking of it) is an assent of the mind to something as revealed by God: Now all assent must be grounded upon evidence, that is, no Man can believe any thing, unless he have, or thinks he hath some reason to do so. For to be confident of a thing without reason, is not Faith; but a presumptuous persuasion, and obstinacy of mind.

3. This

3. This will yet be more evident, if we consider the method, that must of necessity be used to convince any Man of the truth of Religion. Suppose we had to deal with one that is a Stranger, and Enemy to Christianity, What means are proper to be used to gain him over to it? The most natural method surely were this, to acquaint him with the Holy Scriptures, which are the Rule of our Faith and Practice. He would ask us, *Why we believe that Book*? The proper answer would be, *Because it is the Word of God*; this he could not but acknowledge to be a very good reason, if it were true: But then he would ask, *Why we believed it to be the Word of God, rather than* Mahomet's Alchoran, *which pretends no less to be of Divine Inspiration?*

If any Man now should answer, that *he could give no reason why he believed it to be the Word of God, only he believed it to be so, and so every Man else ought to do without enquiring after any further reason, because reason is to be laid aside in matters of Faith*; would not the Man presently reply, *that he had just as much reason as this comes to, to believe the* Alchoran, *or any thing else*; that is, none at all?

†

But

But certainly the better way would be, to satisfie this Man's reason, by proper arguments, that the Scriptures are a divine Revelation, and that no other Book in the world can with equal reason pretend to be so: And if this be a good way, then we do and must call in the assistance of reason for the proof of our Religion.

4. Let it be considered farther, that the highest commendations that are given in Scripture to any ones Faith, are given upon account of the reasonableness of it. *Abraham*'s Faith is famous, and made a pattern to all generations, because he reasoned himself into it, notwithstanding the objections to the contrary; and he did not blindly break through these objections, and wink hard at them; but he look'd them in the face; and gave himself reasonable satisfaction concerning them.

The *Centurion*'s Faith is commended by our Saviour, *Matth.* 8. 11. because when his Servant was sick, he did not desire him to come to his house, but to *speak the word only, and his Servant should be healed*: For he reasoned thus, *I am a man under authority, having Souldiers under me, and I say to this man go and he goeth,*

Vol. I. *goeth, and to another come and he cometh, and to my Servant do this, and he doth it.* Now if he that was himself under authority, could thus command those that were under him; much more could he that had a divine Power and Commission, do what he pleased by his word. And our Saviour is so far from reprehending him for reasoning himself into this belief, that he admires his Faith so much the more for the reasonableness of it, *v.* 10. *When Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed him, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel.*

In like manner our Saviour commends the Woman of *Canaan*'s Faith, because she enforc't it so reasonably. *Matthew* 15. 22. She sued him to help her Daughter; *but he answered her not a word*; and when his Disciples could not prevail with him to mind her, yet still she prest him, *saying, Lord help me*; and when he repulsed her with this severe answer, *It is not meet to take the Childrens bread and cast it to Dogs*, she made this quick and modest reply, *Truth Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Masters Table.* She acknowledgeth her own unworthiness

but

but yet believes his goodneſs to be ſuch, that he will not utterly reject thoſe who humbly ſeek to him; upon which he gives her this teſtimony, *O woman, great is thy Faith!* Serm. 2.

The Apoſtles were divinely inſpired; and yet the *Bereans* are commended, becauſe they enquired and ſatisfied themſelves in the reaſons of their belief, before they aſſented to the doctrine which was delivered to them, even by Teachers that certainly were infallible.

5. None are reproved in Scripture for their unbelief, but where ſufficient reaſon and evidence was offered to them. The *Iſraelites* are generally blamed for their Infidelity; but then it was after ſuch mighty wonders had been wrought for their Conviction.

The *Jews* in our Saviour's time are not condemned ſimply for their unbelief; but for not believing when there was ſuch clear evidence offered to them, So our Saviour himſelf ſays, *If I had not done amongſt them the works which no other man did, they had not had ſin.*

Thomas indeed is blamed for the perverſeneſs of his unbelief, becauſe he would believe nothing but what he himſelf ſaw.

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Laſtly, To ſhew this yet more plainly, let us conſider the great inconvenience, and abſurdity of declining the uſe of Reaſon in matters of Religion. There can be no greater prejudice to Religion, than to decline this tryal.

To ſay we have no Reaſon for our Religion, is to ſay it is unreaſonable. Indeed it is Reaſon enough for any Article of our Faith, that God hath revealed it; becauſe this is one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt cogent reaſons for the belief of any thing. But when we ſay God hath revealed any thing, we muſt be ready to prove it, or elſe we ſay nothing. If we turn off Reaſon here, we level the beſt Religion in the World with the wildeſt and moſt abſurd Enthuſiaſms.

And it does not alter the caſe much, to give Reaſon ill names, to call it *blind*, and *carnal Reaſon*. Our beſt reaſon is but very ſhort and imperfect: But ſince it is no better, we muſt make uſe of it as it is, and make the beſt of it.

Before I paſs from this Argument, I cannot but obſerve, that both the extremes of thoſe who differ from our Church, are generally great Declamers againſt the uſe of Reaſon in matters of Faith.

Faith. If they find *their* account in it, 'tis well; for *our parts* we apprehend no manner of inconvenience, in having Reason on our side; nor need we to desire a better evidence, that any Man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against Reason, and thereby to acknowledge that reason is against him. Men may vilifie Reason as much as they please; and tho *being reviled* she *reviles not again*, yet in a more still and gentle way, she commonly hath her full revenge upon all those that rail at her. Serm. 2.

I have often wonder'd that people can with patience endure to hear their Teachers and Guides talk against Reason; and not only so, but they pay them the greater submission and veneration for it. One would think this but an odd way to gain authority over the minds of Men: But some skilful and designing men have found by experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the ignorant; as Nurses use to endear themselves to Children, by perpetual noise and nonsense.

Thirdly, I observe that God obligeth no Man to believe plain and evident Contradictions, as matters of Faith. *Abraham* could not reasonably have believed this

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ſecond revelation to have been from God, if he had not found ſome way to reconcile it with the firſt. For tho' Man were never ſo much diſpoſed to ſubmit his Reaſon to divine Revelation, yet it is not poſſible for any Man to believe God, againſt God himſelf.

Some Men ſeem to think that they oblige God mightily, by believing plain contradictions. But the matter is quite otherwiſe. He that made Man a *reaſonable* Creature, cannot take it kindly from any Man, to debaſe his Workmanſhip by making himſelf *unreaſonable*. Any therefore, as no ſervice, or obedience; for no Faith is acceptable unto God, but what is reaſonable: if it be not ſo, it may be confidence or preſumption; but it is not Faith. For he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing how abſurd ſoever; becauſe no thing can be more abſurd, than the belief of a plain contradiction; and he that can believe any thing, believes no thing upon good grounds, becauſe to him Truth and Falſehood are all one.

Fourthly, I obſerve, that the great cauſe of the defect of Mens obedience is the weakneſs of their Faith. Did we believe the Commands of God in the Goſpel, and

his promiſes and threatnings, as firmly as *Abraham* believed God in this caſe; what ſhould we not be ready to do, or ſuffer, in obedience to him? Serm. 2.

If our Faith were but as ſtrong and vigorous as his was; the effects of it would be as great and conſpicuous. Were we verily perſuaded, that all the precepts of our Religion are the expreſs Laws of God, and that all the promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel will one day be verified and made good; *What manner of perſons ſhould we be in all holy converſation and godlineſs?* How would the lively thoughts of another world, raiſe us above the vanities of this preſent life; and ſet us out of the reach of the moſt powerful temptations that this World can aſſault us withall; and make us to do all things with regard to Eternity, and to that ſolemn and dreadful account which we muſt one day make to God the Judge of all?

It is nothing but the want of a firm and ſteady belief of theſe things, that makes our Devotion ſo dead and heartleſs, and our reſolutions of doing better ſo weak and inconſtant. This it is, that makes us ſo eaſie a prey to every temptation; and the things of this

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world to look so much bigger than the
are, the enjoyments of it more temp
ing, and the evils of it more terribl
than in truth they are; and in all di
putes betwixt our Conscience and ou
Interest, this makes us hold the ballan
so unequally, and to put our foot upo
the lighter Scale, that it may seem t
weigh down the other.

In a word, in proportion to th
strength or weakness of our Faith, ou
obedience to God will be more or le
constant, uniform, and perfect; becaus
Faith is the great source and spring o
all the Virtues of a good life.

Fifthly, We have great reason to sub-
mit to the ordinary strokes of God's Pro-
vidence upon our selves, or near Relati-
ons, or any thing that is dear to us.
Most of these are easy, compared with
Abraham's case; it requires a prodigious
strength of Faith to perform so miracu-
lous an act of obedience.

Sixthly, and lastly, We are utterly in-
excusable, if we disobey the easie Pre-
cepts of the Gospel. *The yoke of Christ is
easie, and his burden light*, in comparison of
God's former dispensations. This was a
grievous Commandment which God gave
to *Abraham, to sacrifice his only Son:*
It

It was *a hard ſaying* indeed; and *Which of us could have been able to hear it?* Serm. 2.

But if God think fit to call us to the more difficult Duties of ſelf-denial, and ſuffering for his truth and righteouſneſs ſake, we muſt after the example of faithful *Abraham*, not think much to deny or part with any thing for him, no not life it ſelf. But even this which is the hardeſt part of Religion, is eaſier than what God put upon *Abraham*.

For it doth not offer near the violence to nature, to lay down our life in a good cauſe, as it would do, to put a Child to death with our own hands. Beſides the conſideration of the extraordinary comfort and ſupport, and the glorious rewards that are expreſly promiſed to our obedience and ſelf-denial in ſuch a caſe; encouragement enough to make a very difficult duty eaſie.

And whilſt I am perſwading you and my ſelf to reſolution and conſtancy in our Holy Religion, notwithſtanding all hazards and hardſhips that may attend it, I have a juſt ſenſe of the frailty of humane nature, and of humane reſolution: But withal, a moſt firm perſwaſion of the goodneſs of God, that *he will not ſuffer* thoſe who ſincerely love him and his

his Truth, *to be tempted above what they are able.*

I will add but one consideration more to shew the difference betwixt *Abraham*'s case and ours. God commanded him to do the hardest thing in the world to sacrifice his only Son; but he hath given us an easie commandment; and that he might effectually oblige us to our duty, he hath done that for us which he required *Abraham* to do for him; *He hath not spared his own Son, his only Son; but hath given him up to death for us all: And hereby we know that he loveth us, that he hath given his Son for us.*

What God required of *Abraham*, he did not intend should be executed; but one great design of it was to be a Type and Figure of that immense love and kindness which he intended to all mankind, in the Sacrifice of his Son as a propitiation for the Sins of the whole world.

And as the most clear and express promise of the Messias was made to *Abraham*; so the most express and lively Type of the Messias that we meet with in all the old Testament, was *Abraham*'s offering up his Son. And as St. *Hierom* tells us (from an ancient and constant Tradition

on of the *Jews*) the Mountain in *Moriah*, where *Abraham* was commanded to Sacrifice *Iſaac*, was Mount *Calvary*, where our Lord alſo was Crucified and offered up, *that by this one ſacrifice of himſelf once offered, he might perfect for ever them that are ſanctified, and obtain eternal redemption for us.* Serm. 2.

Now to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain; to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt the firſt begotten from the dead; to the Prince of the Kings of the Earth; to him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood; to him be Glory and honour, thanksgiving and power, now and for ever, Amen.

SER-

SERMON III.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL

MDCLXXXVII.

Before the

Princeſs ANN.

Moſes's choice of afflicted Piety, rather than a Kingdom.

HEB. XI. 24, 25.

By Faith Moſes when he was come to years, refuſed to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter; chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.

THE Text ſets before us a great pattern of ſelf-denial; for our better underſtanding whereof, I will give a brief account of the Hiſtory of *Moſes*, to

Vol. I. to which our Apoſtle in this paſſa
doth refer.

When *Moſes* was born, his Paren
(for fear of the cruel Law which *Pharao*
had made, *That all the male Childr*
of the Hebrews, *ſo ſoon as they w*
born, ſhould be put to death) aft
they had hid him three months, did
laſt expoſe him in an Ark of Bulruſh
upon the River *Nile*, and committ
him to the providence of God, who
they deſpair'd to conceal any longer
their own care.

Pharaoh's Daughter, coming by t
River ſide, eſpied him, and had co
paſſion on him; and gueſſing him
be one of the *Hebrew* Children, call
for an *Hebrew* Nurſe, to take care
him, who, as the Providence of God h
ordered it, proved to be the Child's o
Mother. As he grew up, *Pharaoh*
Daughter took care of his Education
all Princely qualities, and adopted hi
for her Son; and *Pharaoh* (as *Joſeph*
tells us) being without Son, deſigne
him Heir of his Kingdom.

Moſes refuſed this great offer. B
why did he refuſe it, when it ſeem'd
be preſented to him by the providen
of God, and was brought about in

† ſtran

range a manner; and when by this means he might probably have had it his power to have eased the *Israelites* of their cruel bondage, and perhaps have had the opportunity of reducing that great Kingdom from the Worship of Idols to the true God? Why could he refuse a Kingdom which was offered to him with so fair an oportunity of doing so much good? Serm. 3.

That which seems to have prevailed with *Moses*, was this, That he could not accept the offer, without forsaking God, and renouncing his Religion; for considering how strangely the *Egyptians* were addicted to Idolatry, he could never hope to be accepted for Heir of that Kingdom, unless he would violate his Conscience, either by abandoning or dissembling his Religion.

And how unlikely it was that he should prevail with them to change their Religion, he might easily judge by the Example of *Joseph*, who tho he had so much authority and esteem amongst them, by having been so great a Benefactor to their Nation; yet he could never move them in the least, in that matter.

Now

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Now ſeeing he had no hopes of attaining, or enjoying that dignity, without ſinning grievouſly againſt God, he would not purchaſe a Kingdom at ſo unconſcionable a price. And as for the deliverance of his people, he was content to truſt the providence and promiſe of God for that; and in the mean time was reſolved rather to take a part in the afflictions of God's People, *than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon.*

From the words thus explained, I ſhall take occaſion to conſider theſe *Four* things.

I. *Moſes*'s ſelf-denial, in preferring and chuſing a ſtate of afflicted Piety, before any ſinful enjoyments whatſoever, before the greateſt earthly happineſs and proſperity, when it was not to be attained and enjoyed upon other terms than of ſinning againſt God.

II. I ſhall conſider thoſe circumſtances of this ſelf-denial of *Moſes*, which do very much commend and ſet off the virtue of it.

III. The prudence and reaſonableneſs of this choice, in preferring a ſtate of afflicted Piety and Virtue, before the greateſt proſperity and pleaſure of a ſinful courſe.

IV. Sup-

IV. Suppoſing this choice to be reaſonable, I ſhall enquire how it comes to paſs that ſo many make another choice. Serm. 3.

I. We will conſider *Moſes* his ſelf-denial, in preferring a ſtate of afflicted piety, before the greateſt earthly happineſs and proſperity, when it is not to be enjoyed upon other terms, than of ſinning againſt God. He was adopted Heir of the Kingdom of *Egypt*, (one of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing Kingdoms then in the World;) But he could not hope to attain to this dignity, and to ſecure himſelf in the poſſeſſion of it, upon other terms than of complying with that Nation, in their Idolatrous Religion and Worſhip.

Now being brought up in the belief of the true God, the God of *Iſrael*, by his Mother, to whom *Pharaoh*'s Daughter had committed him, he could not without great violence to his Conſcience, and the principles of his Education, renounce the true God, and fall off to the Idolatry of the *Egyptians*: And for this reaſon *he refuſed to be called the Son of* Pharaoh's *Daughter, chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction* with the worſhippers of the true God, than to

Vol. I. have the temporary enjoyment of any thing that was not to be had without ſin; for ſo the word ought to be render'd, ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἁμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν, *than to have the temporary enjoyment of ſin.* So here was *Moſes* his ſelf-denial, that he choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the Worſhippers of the true God, than to gain a Kingdom, by the renouncing of God and Religion.

II. We will conſider thoſe circumſtances of his ſelf-denial, which do very much commend and ſet off the virtue of it.

1. What it was he refuſed to be called; *the Son of* Pharaoh's *Daughter*; that is, to be Heir of one of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing Kingdoms in the world: A temptation ſo great, that the Devil himſelf could not find out one much greater, when he ſet upon the Son of God, to tempt him to fall down and worſhip him.

And when we conſider for what inconſiderable things ſome men ſell their Religion and their Conſciences, we ſhall think it no ſmall temptation which *Moſes* here reſiſted. *Si violandum eſt jus, regnandi causâ violandum eſt*; *If a Man would do any unjuſt thing, and violate his Religion and Conſcience, he would not do*

is for leſs than a Kingdom; and it would be a very hard bargain, even upon thoſe terms. Serm. 3.

2. Conſider not only what he refuſed; but what he choſe in the place of it; a ſtate of great affliction and ſuffering. Had he refuſed a Kingdom, and choſen the quiet condition of a Subject of middle rank (beneath envy and above contempt,) his ſelf-denial had not been ſo great; nay perhaps he had made a wiſe choice, in the account of the wiſeſt Men, in preferring a plentiful and quiet retirement, before the cares of a Crown, and the burden of publick Government.

But it is very rare to find a Man that would chuſe rather to be oppreſt and perſecuted; than to be a Prince, and to have the ſweet power to uſe others as he pleaſed.

3. Conſider how fair a proſpect he had of enjoying this Kingdom, if he could but have come up to the terms of it. He did not reject it, becauſe he deſpaired of attaining it: for he had all the right that a good title could give him, being adopted Heir to it; and yet he refuſed it.

Vol. 1. To which I may add, that his breeding was such, as might easily kindle ambitious thoughts in him. He was brought up in *Pharaoh*'s Court, and was the Darling and Favourite of it; exceeding beautiful (as *Josephus* tells us) and *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*; than which no two qualities are more apt to puff up, and swell a Man with big thoughts of himself.

They that are bred in a low condition, never think of a Kingdom; Men not being apt to aspire to things which are remote, and at a great distance from them. But nothing is more rare in persons of great and generous minds, than such a self-denial as this.

4. Let it be considered in the last place, that this was a deliberate choice, not any rash and sudden determination made by him, when he was of incompetent age to make a true judgment of things. And this the Apostle takes notice of in the Text, as a very memorable circumstance, that *when he was come to years, he refused to be called the Son of* Pharaoh's *Daughter*. And St. *Stephen* tells us that he was *full forty years old* when he made this choice, *Acts* 7. 23. *When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart*

heart, to viſit his brethren, the children of Iſrael. When he was of ripeſt judgment, and in the height of his proſperity, and reputation, he made this choice: for it is ſaid in the verſe before, that *Moſes was learned in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and deed*; that is, he was in great reputation for his Wiſdom and Valour. Serm. 3.

This ſeems to refer to other paſſages of his Life, which are not recorded in the Scripture Hiſtory, but related at large by *Joſephus* out of Hiſtorians extant in his time. For he tells, that when the *Ethiopians* had invaded *Egypt*, and almoſt over-run it, *Pharaoh* was directed by the Oracle at *Memphis*, to make *Moſes* his General, who by his extraordinary Conduct and Courage overthrew the *Ethiopians*, and drave them out of *Egypt*.

This *Moſes* did not think fit to relate of himſelf; but St. *Stephen* ſeems to allude to it, when he ſays, that *he was mighty in word and deed*: And then it follows; *and when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to viſit his brethren the children of Iſrael*; that is, when he was at full maturity of judgment, and in the height of his Proſperity, and

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Reputation, he quitted the Court of *Egypt*, and went to viſit his afflicted Brethren, and choſe rather to take part with them in their Sufferings, than to accept thoſe great offers that were made to him.

There is likewiſe another paſſage in *Joſephus* concerning *Moſes*, which ſeems to be a forerunner of the contempt which he ſhewed afterward of the Crown of *Egypt*; That when *Moſes* was about three years old, *Thermuthis*, the Daughter of *Pharaoh*, brought the Child to him, who took him in his arms, and put his Diadem upon his Head: But *Moſes* took it off, and caſt it to the ground, and trampled it under his feet. This was but a childiſh act, and they who ſaw it would eaſily believe, that for all his childiſh contempt of it then, if it were put upon his Head in good earneſt, when he came to be a Man, he would hold it on faſter, and uſe it with more reſpect.

And it is not improbable, but that the Apoſtle might have ſome regard to this, when he ſays, that Moſes *when he came to Years*; intimating that he did not only trample upon the Diadem of *Pharaoh*, when he was a Child; but when

when he was come to years, and was capable of judging better of those things, *he refused to be called the Son of* Pharaoh's *Daughter.* Serm. 3.

But before I proceed any farther, I cannot but take notice of an Objection, which may seem to reflect greatly upon the integrity of *Moses.* Can we think him so very conscientious a Man, who perswaded the people of *Israel,* and pretended God's direction in the case, to cheat the *Egyptians* of their Jewels, under a fraudulent pretence of borrowing them? There is some difficulty in the thing, as at first sight it appears: And yet I doubt not, with your favourable attention, and free from prejudice, to vindicate *Moses* clearly in this matter.

And I shall not insist upon that, which is commonly and truly said in this case; That God, who is the supream Lord of all things, may transfer the Rights of Men from one to another: because the objection doth not lye against God's Right to take away from any man what he hath given him; but against the fraudulent manner of doing it, which seems unworthy of God to command or encourage.

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Now this matter I think is capable of another, and much clearer anſwer; which in ſhort is this, and grounded upon the Hiſtory, as we find it related, *Exod.* 12. The Providence of God did, it ſeems, deſign by this way to make ſome reparation to the *Iſraelites*, for the tyrannical uſage which they had received from the *Egyptians*; and that firſt (as the Text expreſly tells us) *in giving them favour with the Egyptians*, who in truth, for their own ends, and to get rid of ſuch troubleſome Gueſts, were diſpoſed to lend them any thing they had.

Thus far all is right; here is nothing but fair borrowing and lending: And if the *Iſraelites* acquired a right to thoſe things afterwards, there was then no obligation to reſtitution.

Let us ſee then how the Providence of God brought this about: Namely, by permitting the *Egyptians* afterwards, without cauſe, and after leave given them to depart, to purſue them, with a deſign to have deſtroyed them; by which Hoſtility and Perfidiouſneſs they plainly forfeited their Right to what they had only lent before. For this hoſtile attempt, which would have warranted the *Iſraelites*

elites to have spoiled them of their Jewels, if they had been in the possession of the *Egyptians*, did certainly warrant them to keep them when they had them; and by this means they became rightful possessors of what they had only by Loan before, and could not have detained without fraud and injustice, if this hostility of the *Egyptians* had not given them a new title and clear right to them. Serm. 3.

But I proceed to the *third* thing I proposed, which was to vindicate the prudence and reasonableness of this choice. And in speaking to this, I shall abstract from the particular case of *Moses*, and shew in general, That it is a prudent and reasonable thing, to prefer even an afflicted state of Piety and Virtue, before the greatest pleasures and prosperity of a sinful course: And this will appear, if we consider these *two* things.

I. The sufferings of good Men upon account of Religion, together with the reward of them.

II. The temporary enjoyment of sin, with the mischiefs and inconveniencies consequent upon them.

I. The

Vol. I. I. The ſufferings of good Men, upon the account of Religion, together with the reward of them. This *Moſes* had in his eye, when he made this choice; for therefore *he choſe to ſuffer Affliction with the People of God, rather than to enjoy the Pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a Seaſon*, becauſe *he had reſpect to the recompence of reward.* And tho he had but a very imperfect diſcovery, in compariſon, of the future ſtate; yet it ſeems he had ſo much aſſurance of the goodneſs of God, as firmly to believe that he ſhould be no loſer at the laſt, by any thing that he ſuffered for God and Religion.

Indeed if there were no life after this, and we had no expectation beyond this world, the wiſeſt thing we could do, would be to enjoy as much of the preſent contentment of this world, as we could make our ſelves Maſters of. But if we be deſigned for immortality, and ſhall be unſpeakably happy, or intolerably miſerable in another world, according as we have demeaned our ſelves in this life; then certainly it is reaſonable that we ſhould take the greateſt care of the longeſt duration, and be content to diſpenſe with ſome preſent inconveniences, for

for an eternal felicity; and be willing to labour and take pains for a little while, that we may be happy for ever. And this is accounted prudence in the account of the wiſeſt Men, to part with a little in preſent, for a far greater future advantage. Serm. 3.

But the diſproportion betwixt Time and Eternity is ſo vaſt, that did we but firmly believe, that we ſhall live for ever, nothing in this world could reaſonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to ſuffer, for the obtaining of a bleſſed immortality. And upon this belief and perſuaſion of a mighty reward, beyond all their preſent ſufferings, and that they ſhould be infinite gainers at the laſt, the Primitive Chriſtians were kept from ſinking under their preſent ſufferings, and fortified againſt all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do unto them. And if we would conſider all things together, and mind the inviſible things of another world, as well as the things which are ſeen, we ſhould eaſily diſcern, that he who ſuffers for God and Religion, does not renounce his happineſs, but put it out to intereſt, upon terms of greateſt advantage; and does wiſely conſider his own beſt, and moſt laſting intereſt. This is the *Firſt.*

II. This

Vol. I. II. This will yet more evidently appear, if we conſider the temporary injoyments of ſin, together with the miſchiefs and inconveniencies attending, and conſequent upon them; that as to the nature of them, they are mixt, and imperfect; as to the duration of them, they are ſhort, and but for a ſeaſon; and as to the final iſſue and conſequence of them, that they end in miſery and ſorrow.

1. As to the nature of them, all the pleaſures and enjoyments of ſin are mixt and imperfect. A wicked Man may make a ſhew of mirth and pleaſure, but *even in laughter his heart is ſorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heavineſs.* There can be no true and ſincere pleaſure in any ſinful and vitious courſe, tho it be attended with all the Pomp and Splendor of outward Happineſs and Proſperity; for where ever ſin and vice is, there muſt be guilt; and where ever guilt is, the mind will be reſtleſs and unquiet.

For there are two very troubleſome and tormenting paſſions, which are naturally conſequent upon guilt; Shame and Fear: Shame, ariſing from the apprehenſion of the danger of being diſcovered; and Fear, from the apprehenſi-

on

on of the danger of being puniſht: And theſe do continually haunt the ſinner, and fill him with inward horror and confuſion, in his moſt ſecret retirements And if ſin were attended with no other trouble but the guilt of it, a wiſe Man would not commit it, if it were for no other reaſon, but meerly for the peace and quiet of his own mind. Serm. 3.

2. The enjoyments of ſin, as to the duration of them are but ſhort. Upon this conſideration, *Moſes* ſet no great price and value upon them, but preferred affliction and ſuffering in good company, and in a good cauſe, before *the temporary enjoyments of ſin.*

If the enjoyments of this world were perfect in their nature, and had no mixture of trouble and ſorrow in them: Yet this would be a great abatement of them, that they are of ſo ſhort and uncertain a continuance. The pleaſure of moſt ſins expires with the act of them; and when that is done, the delight vaniſheth.

I cannot deny but there are ſeveral worldly advantages to be purchaſed by ſin, which may perhaps be of a longer continuance; as Riches and Honours, the common purchaſe of Covetouſneſs

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touſneſs and Ambition, and of that long train of inferior Vices which attend upon them, and miniſter unto them: But even thoſe enjoyments are in their own nature of an uncertain continuance, and much more uncertain for being purchaſed by indirect and ill means. But if the enjoyment of theſe things were ſure to be of the ſame date with our lives; yet how ſhort a duration is that, compared with Eternity? Make the utmoſt allowance to theſe things, that can be; yet we can but enjoy them whilſt we are in this world. When we come into the world of Spirits, it will ſignifie nothing to us to have been rich or great in this world. When we ſhall ſtand before that higheſt Tribunal, it will not avail us in the leaſt to have been Princes, and great Men, and Judges on the Earth; the pooreſt Man that ever lived in this world, will then be upon equal terms with the biggeſt of us all.

For all mankind ſhall then ſtand upon a level, and thoſe civil diſtinctions of rich and poor, of baſe and honourable, which ſeem now ſo conſiderable, and make ſuch a glaring difference amongſt Men in this world, ſhall all then be

be laid aſide, and moral differences ſhall only take place. All the diſtinctions which will then be made, will be betwixt the good and the bad; the righteous and the wicked; and the difference betwixt a good and bad Man will be really much greater, than ever it ſeemed to be betwixt the higheſt and meaneſt perſons in this world. Serm. 3.

And if this be ſo, why ſhould we value the enjoyments of ſin at ſo high a rate, which at the beſt are only conſiderable (and that only in the imagination of vain Men) during our abode in this world; but bear no price at all in that Country where we muſt live for ever: Or if they did, we cannot carry them along with us. The guilt of them indeed will follow us with a vengeance; the injuſtice and all the ill arts we have uſed for the getting or keeping of them, eſpecially, if at once we have *made Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conſcience.*

If we have changed our Religion, or which is much worſe, if continuing in the profeſſion of it, we have betrayed it, and the intereſt of it, for the gaining or ſecuring of any of theſe things; we ſhall find to our ſorrow, that tho *the enjoyments of ſin* were *but for a ſea-*

ſon,

Vol. I. *ſon*, the guilt of it will never leave us nor forſake us; but will ſtick cloſe to us, and make us miſerable for ever. But this belongs to the

III. Thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, namely, The final iſſue, and conſequence of a ſinful courſe, which is miſery and ſorrow, many times in this world; but moſt certainly in the next.

1. In this world, the very beſt iſſue and conſequence of a ſinful courſe, that we can imagin, is Repentance: And even this hath a great deal of ſenſible pain and trouble in it: for it is many times (eſpecially after great ſins, and a long continuance in them,) accompanied with much regret and horror: with deep and piercing ſorrow; with diſmal and deſpairing thoughts of God's mercy; and with fearful apprehenſions of his wrath and vengeance. So that if this were the worſt conſequence of ſin (which indeed is the beſt) no Man that conſiders and calculates things wiſely, would purchaſe the pleaſure of any ſin, at the price of ſo much anguiſh and ſorrow, as a true and deep repentance will coſt him; eſpecially, ſince a true repentance, does in many caſes oblige Men to the reſtitution of

of that which hath been gained by ſin, if it hath been got by the injury of another. Serm. 3.

And this conſideration quite takes away the pleaſure and profit of an ill gotten Eſtate. Better never to have had it, than to be obliged to refund it. A wiſe man will forbear the moſt pleaſant meats, if he know before-hand that they will make him deadly ſick, and that he ſhall never be at eaſe, till he have brought them up again.

No Man that believes the threatnings of God, and the judgments of another world, would ever ſin, but that he hopes to retrieve all again by repentance. But it is the greateſt folly in the world to commit any ſin upon this hope: For that is to pleaſe ones ſelf for the preſent, in hopes to have more trouble afterwards than the pleaſure comes to. But eſpecially no Man would be guilty of an act of injuſtice and oppreſſion, in hopes to repent of it afterwards; becauſe there can be no repentance for ſuch ſins without reſtitution; and 'tis perfect madneſs for a Man to run the hazard of his Soul, to get an Eſtate, in hopes of reſtoring it again: for ſo he muſt do that truly repents of ſuch a ſin. But,

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2. In the other world, the final iſſue and conſequence of all the pleaſures of ſin unrepented of, will certainly be miſery and ſorrow. How quietly ſoever a ſinner may paſs through this world, or out of it; miſery will certainly overtake him in the next, unſpeakable and eternal miſery, ariſing from an apprehenſion of the greateſt loſs, and a ſenſe of the ſharpeſt pain; and thoſe ſadly aggravated by the remembrance of paſt pleaſure, and the deſpair of future eaſe.

From a ſad apprehenſion and melancholy reflection upon his ineſtimable loſs. In the other world; the ſinner ſhall be eternally ſeparated from God, who is the fountain of happineſs. This is the firſt part of that miſerable ſentence which ſhall be paſt upon the wicked; *depart from me.*

Sinners are not now ſenſible of the joyes of Heaven, and the happineſs of that ſtate, and therefore are not capable of eſtimating the greatneſs of ſuch a loſs: But this ſtupidity and inſenſibleneſs of ſinners, continues only during this preſent ſtate, which affords Men variety of objects and pleaſures, to divert and entertain them: But when they are

are once enter'd upon the other world, they will then have nothing elſe to take up their thoughts, but the ſad condition, into which by their own wilful negligence and folly they have plunged themſelves. They ſhall then, *lift up their eyes*, and with the rich Man in the parable, at once *ſee the happineſs of others, and feel their own miſery and torment.* Serm. 3.

But this is not all. Beſides the apprehenſion of ſo great a loſs, they ſhall be ſenſible of the ſoreſt and ſharpeſt pains; and how grievous thoſe ſhall be, we may conjecture by what the Scripture ſays of them in general; That they are the effects of a mighty diſpleaſure, of Anger and Omnipotence met together, far greater than can be deſcribed by any pains and ſufferings which we are acquainted withal in this world: *For who knows the Power of God's anger*, and the utmoſt of what Omnipotent Juſtice can do to ſinners? *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

One would think this were miſery enough, and needed no farther aggravation: But yet it hath two terrible ones; from the remembrance of paſt pleaſures, and the deſpair of any future eaſe and remedy.

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The remembrance of past pleasure makes present sufferings more sharp and sensible. For as nothing commends pleasure more, and gives a quicker relish to happiness, than precedent pain and suffering: (for perhaps there is not a greater pleasure in the world, than in the sudden ease which a Man finds after a sharp fit of the Stone) so nothing enrageth affliction more, and sets a keener edg upon misery, than to pass into great pain immediately out of a state of ease and pleasure. This was the stinging aggravation of the rich Man's torment, That *in his life time he had received his good things, and had fared so deliciously every day.*

But the greatest aggravation of all is, the despair of any future ease and remedy. The duration of this misery is set forth to us in Scripture, by such expressions as do signifie the longest and most interminable duration. *Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire*, Matth. 25. and Mark 9. 43. *Where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* And in the *Revel.* it is said, that *the wicked shall be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever*; without intermission, and without end. And this surely is the perfection of misery, for a Man to lye under the

the greateſt torments, and to be in deſpair of ever finding the leaſt eaſe. Serm. 3.

Let us now compare things together; on the one hand, the ſufferings of good Men, for a good Conſcience, and the reward that follows them; and on the other hand, the enjoyments of ſin, with the miſchief and miſery that attends them, and will certainly overtake them in this world, or in the next: and then we ſhall eaſily diſcern which of theſe is to be preferred in a wiſe Man's choice.

And indeed the choice is ſo very plain, that a Man muſt be ſtrangely forſaken of his reaſon, and blinded by ſenſe, who does not prefer that courſe of life, which will probably make him happier in this world, but moſt certainly in the next.

IV. There remains now only the *Fourth* and laſt particular to be ſpoken to; *viz.* Suppoſing this choice to be reaſonable, to enquire whence it comes to paſs, that ſo many make a quite contrary choice. How is it that the greateſt part of mankind are ſo widely miſtaken, as to prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin, before Conſcience and Religion; eſpecially, if it be attended with great afflictions and ſufferings? And of this I ſhall give you

Vol. I. as brief an account as I can, and ſo conclude this Diſcourſe.

This wrong choice generally proceeds from one or both of theſe two cauſes; from want of Faith; or from want of conſideration; or of both.

1. One great reaſon why Men make ſo imprudent a choice, is unbelief; either the want of Faith, or the weakneſs of it. Either Men do not believe the recompences of another life, or they are not ſo firmly perſuaded of the reality of them. If Men do not at all believe theſe things, there is no foundation for Religion; for *he that cometh unto God* (that is, he that thinks of being religious) *muſt believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, as the Apoſtle reaſons in the beginning of this Chapter.

But I hope, there are but few that are, or can be Infidels, as to theſe great and fundamental principles of Religion. But it is to be feared, that the Faith of a great many is but weak and wavering; their Faith is rather negative; they do not disbelieve theſe things; but they are not firmly perſuaded of them; their Faith is rather an opinion, than a root-

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ed and well grounded, perſuaſion; and therefore no wonder, if it be not ſo ſtrong and vigorous a principle of action, and like the Faith of *Abraham* and *Moſes*, and other worthies mentioned in this Chapter. For where Faith is in its full ſtrength and vigour, it will have proportionable effects upon the reſolutions and wills of Men: But where it is but weak, it is of little or no efficacy. And this is the true reaſon, why ſo many forſake Religion, and cleave to this preſent world; and when it comes to the puſh, chuſe rather to ſin, than to ſuffer; and will rather quit the truth, than endure perſecution for it. Serm. 3.

Theſe are they, whom our Saviour deſcribes, *who receive the word with joy, and endure for a while; but when tribulation and perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, preſently they are offended:* not that they did not believe the Word; but their Faith had taken no deep root, and therefore it withered. The weakneſs and wavering of Mens Faith, makes them unſtable and inconſtant in their courſe; becauſe they are not of one mind, but divided betwixt two intereſts, that of this world, and the other; and

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the double minded man (as St. *James* tells us) *is unſtable in all his ways.*

It is generally a true rule; ſo much wavering as we ſee in the actions and lives of Men, ſo much weakneſs there is in their Faith; and therefore he that would know what any Man firmly believes, let him attend to his actions more than to his profeſſions.

If any Man live ſo, as no Man that heartily believes the Chriſtian Religion can live, it is not credible that ſuch a Man doth firmly believe the Chriſtian Religion. He ſays he does; but there is a greater evidence in the caſe than words; there is *Teſtimonium rei*, the Man's actions are to the contrary, and they do beſt declare the inward ſenſe of the Man. Did Men firmly believe that there is a God that governs the world, and that *he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge it in righteouſneſs*; and that all mankind ſhall ſhortly appear before him, and give an account of themſelves, and all their actions to him; and that thoſe who have *kept the Faith and a good Conſcience*, and have *lived ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world*, ſhall be unſpeakably and eternally happy; but

but *the fearful and unbelieving*, thoſe who out of fear or intereſt, have deſerted the Faith, or lived wicked lives, *ſhall have their portion in the lake, which burns with fire and brimſtone*; I ſay, were Men firmly perſuaded of theſe things, it is hardly credible that any Man ſhould make a wrong choice, and forſake the ways of Truth and Righteouſneſs, upon any temptation whatſoever. Serm. 3.

Faith, even in temporal matters, is a mighty principle of action, and will make Men to attempt and undergo ſtrange and difficult things. The Faith of the Goſpel ought to be much more operative and powerful; becauſe the Objects of Hope and Fear, which it preſents to us, are far greater, and more conſiderable, than any thing that this world can tempt or terrifie us withal.

Would we but by Faith make preſent to our minds, the inviſible things of another world, the happineſs of Heaven, and the terrors of Hell, and were we as verily perſuaded of them, as if they were in our view; how ſhould we deſpiſe all the pleaſures and terrors of this world! And with what eaſe ſhould we reſiſt and repel all thoſe temptations, which would

Vol. I. ſeduce us from our duty, or draw us into ſin!

A firm and unſhaken belief of theſe things, would effectually remove all thoſe mountains of difficulty and diſcouragement, which Men fancy to themſelves in the ways of Religion. *To him that believeth, all things are poſſible*, and moſt things would be eaſie.

2. Another reaſon of this wrong choice, is want of conſideration; for this would ſtrengthen our Faith, and make it more vigorous and powerful: And indeed a Faith which is well rooted and eſtabliſhed doth ſuppoſe a wiſe and deep conſideration of things; and the want of this is a great cauſe of the fatal miſcarriage of Men; that they do not ſit down and conſider with themſelves ſeriouſly, how much Religion is their intereſt, and how much it will coſt them to be true to it, and to perſevere in it to the end.

We ſuffer our ſelves to be governed by ſenſe, and to be tranſported with preſent things: But do not conſider our future and laſting intereſt, and the whole duration of an immortal Soul. And this is the reaſon, why ſo many men are hurried away by the preſent and ſenſible delights of this world; becauſe they will not take

take time to think of what will be here-after. Serm. 3.

For it is not to be imagined, but that the Man who hath ſeriouſly conſidered what ſin is, the ſhortneſs of its pleaſure, and the eternity of its puniſhment; ſhould reſolve to forſake ſin, and to live a holy and virtuous life.

To conclude this whole Diſcourſe. If Men did but ſeriouſly believe the great principles of Religion; the Being and the Providence of God; the immortality of their Souls; the glorious rewards, and the dreadful puniſhments of another world; they could not poſſibly make ſo imprudent a choice, as we ſee a great part of mankind to do; they could not be induced to forſake God and Religion for any temporal intereſt and advantage; to renounce the favour of Heaven, and all their hopes of happineſs in another world, for any thing that this world can afford, nay not for the whole world, if it were offered to them. For as our Saviour reaſons in this very caſe of forſaking our Religion for any temporal intereſt, or conſideration; *What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?*

When

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When ever any of us are tempted in this kind; let that solemn declaration of our Saviour and our Judge be continually in our minds; *He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy Angels.*

And we have great cause to thank God, to see so many in this day of tryal, and hour of temptation, to adhere with so much resolution and constancy to their Holy Religion, and to prefer *the keeping of Faith, and a good Conscience*, to all earthly considerations and advantages.

And this very thing, that so many hold their Religion so fast, and are so loth to part with it, gives great hopes that they intend to make good use of it, and to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it; which alone can give us peace, whilst we live, and comfort when we come to die; and after death secure to us the possession of a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

To

To which, God of his Infinite Goodneſs bring us all, for his mercy's ſake, in Jeſus Chriſt: To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory, World without end. Amen. Serm. 3.

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SERMON IV.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

The firſt Sermon on this Text.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; for he is faithful that hath promiſed.

THE main Scope and deſign of this Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, is to perſuade the *Jews*, who were newly converted to Chriſtianity, to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of that Holy and Excellent Religion which they had embraced; and not to be removed from it, either by the ſubtile inſinuations of their Brethren the *Jews*, who pretended that they were in poſſeſſion of the true ancient Religion, and the only true Church of God upon Earth; or by the terrour of the

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the Heathen perſecution, which was ſo hot againſt them at that time. And to this end the Author of this Epiſtle doth by great variety of arguments demonſtrate the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion above the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation; and ſhews at large, that in all thoſe reſpects upon which the *Jews* valued themſelves and their Religion (as namely upon the account of their Lawgiver, their High-Prieſts, and their Sacrifices) the Chriſtian Religion had every way the advantage of them.

And having made this clear, he concludes with an earneſt exhortation to them to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of this excellent Religion, which was revealed to them by *the Son of God*, the true propitiatory Sacrifice, and the great High-Prieſt of their profeſſion, and into which they had ſolemnly been initiated and admitted by Baptiſm; *verſ.* 19, 20, 21, 22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to enter into the holieſt, by the blood of Jeſus, by a new and living way, which he hath conſecrated for us through the vail, that is to ſay, his fleſh; and having an high-prieſt over the houſe of God; Let us draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of faith,* that is, let us ſincerely ſerve

ſerve God with a firm perſuaſion of the Truth and Excellency of this Holy Religion, into the profeſſion whereof we were ſolemnly admitted by Baptiſm; for that is undoubtedly the meaning of the following words; *having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience, and our bodies waſht with pure water*; the *Water*, with which our Bodies are waſht in Baptiſm, ſignifying our ſpiritual Regeneration, and *the purging of our Conſciences from dead Works, to ſerve the living God.* From all which he concludes, *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*: This refers to that ſolemn *Profeſſion* of Faith, which was made by all Chriſtians at their Baptiſm, and which is contained in the ancient *Creed* of the Chriſtian Church, called by the ancient Fathers, *The Rule of Faith.* Serm. 4.

Let us hold faſt, κρατῶμεν, *let us firmly retain*; the ſame with κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας, Chap. 4. 14. *Seeing then we have a great high-prieſt which is paſſed into the Heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us take faſt hold of our profeſſion.* So here in the Text, the

Vol. I. Apoſtle upon the ſame Conſideration exhorts Chriſtians *to retain*, or *hold faſt*, τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος, *the Confeſſion* or *Profeſſion of their hope*; that is, the Hope of the Reſurrection of the Dead, and Everlaſting Life, which was the Concluſion of that *Faith* or *Creed*, whereof in Baptiſm they made a Solemn Profeſſion. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith or Hope, without wavering*; the word is ἀκλινῆ, *inflexible, unmoveable, ſteady*, and *not apt to waver and be ſhaken* by every Wind of contrary Doctrine, nor by the Blaſts and Storms of Perſecution. *For he is faithful that hath promiſed.* If we continue faithful and ſteady to God, he will be *faithful*, to make good all the Promiſes which he hath made to us.

In the words thus explained, there are *Two* things which I ſhall diſtinctly conſider.

Firſt, The Exhortation; *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith, without wavering:* And,

Secondly, The Argument or Encouragement uſed to enforce it; *He is faithful that promiſed.* I begin with the

Firſt,

Serm. 4.

First, The Exhortation, to be constant and steady in the Profession of the Christian Religion; *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* In the handling of this, and that we may the better understand the true meaning of this Exhortation here in the Text, I shall do these *two* things.

I. I shall shew Negatively, wherein this Constancy and Steadiness in the Profession of the true Religion does not consist. And here I shall remove one or two things which are thought by some, to be inconsistent with Constancy and Steadfastness in Religion.

II. I shall shew Positively, what is implied in a Constant and Steady Profession of the true Religion.

I. I shall shew Negatively, what Constancy and Steadfastness in the Profession of the true Religion does not imply. And there are *two* things which are thought by some to be imply'd, in *holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

First, That Men should not take the liberty to examine their Religion, and enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of it.

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Secondly, That men ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any Reaſons that can be brought againſt the true Religion as they think, which they have once entertained.

Firſt, That Men ſhould not take the liberty to examine their Religion, and to enquire into the grounds and Reaſons of it. This I think is ſo far from being forbidden in this Exhortation; that on the contrary, I doubt not to make it appear, that a free and impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Reaſons of our Religion, and a thorough Tryal and Examination of them, is one of the beſt Means to confirm and eſtabliſh us in the Profeſſion of it: I mean, that all Perſons that are capable of it, ſhould do it, and that they will find great benefit and advantage by it. For I do not think that this is a Duty equally and indifferently incumbent upon all; nor indeed fit and proper for all Perſons; becauſe all are not equally capable of doing it. There are two ſorts of Perſons that are in a great meaſure incapable of doing it.

1. Chil-

Serm. 4.

1. Children.

2. Such grown Persons as are of a very mean and low capacity, and improvement of Understanding.

Children are not fit to examine, but only to learn and believe what is taught them by their Parents and Teachers. They are fit to have the fear of God, and the Principles of the true Religion instilled into them: but they are by no means fit to discern between a true and false Religion, and to chuse for themselves, and to make a change of their Religion; as hath of late been allowed to them in a Nation not far from us, and by publick Edict declared, that Children at *Seven* Years Old, are fit to chuse and to change their Religion: Which is the first Law I ever heard of, that allows Children at that Age to do any Act for themselves, that is of Consequence and Importance to them, for the remaining part of their Lives, and which they shall stand obliged to perform and make good. They are indeed Baptized, according to the custome and usage of the Chri-

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ſtian Church, in their Infancy: But they do not enter into this Obligation themſelves; but their Sureties undertake for them, that when they come to Age, they ſhall take this Promiſe upon themſelves, and confirm and make it good. But ſurely, they can do no Act for themſelves, and in their own name, at that Age, which can be obligatory. They can neither make any Contracts that ſhall be valid, nor incur any Debt, nor oblige themſelves by any Promiſe, nor chuſe themſelves a Guardian, nor do any Act that may bring them under an Inconvenience, when they ſhall come at Age. And can we think them of diſcretion ſufficient at that time, to do a thing of the greateſt Moment and Conſequence of all other; and which will concern them to all Eternity; namely to chuſe their Religion? There is indeed one Part of one Religion (which we all know) which Children at *Seven* Years of Age are fit (I do not ſay to Judge of, but) to be as fond of, and to practiſe to as good purpoſe, as thoſe of riper

riper Years; and that is, to worſhip Images, to tell their Beads, to ſay their Prayers, and to be preſent at the Service of God in an unknown Tongue; and this they are more likely to chuſe at that Age, than thoſe who are of riper and more improv'd Underſtandings; and if they do not chuſe it at that time, it is ten to one, they will not chuſe it afterwards. I ſhall ſay no more of this, but that it is a very extraordinary Law, and ſuch as perhaps was never thought of before, from the beginning of the World. Thus much for Children. Serm. 4.

As for grown Perſons, who are of a very low and mean capacity of Underſtanding, and either by reaſon of the weakneſs of their Faculties, or other Diſadvantages which they lye under, are in little or no probability of improving themſelves; Theſe are always to be conſidered as in the condition of Children, and Learners, and therefore muſt of neceſſity, in things which are not plain and obvious to the meaneſt Capacities, truſt and rely upon the Judgment of others. And it is really

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much wiſer and ſafer for them ſo to do, than to depend upon their own Judgments, and to lean to their own Underſtandings; and ſuch Perſons, if they be modeſt and humble, and pray earneſtly to God for his Aſſiſtance and Direction, and are careful to practiſe what they know, and to live up to the beſt Light and Knowledge which they have, ſhall not miſcarry, meerly for want of thoſe farther degrees of Knowledge which they had no Capacity nor Oportunity to attain; becauſe their Ignorance is unavoidable, and God will require no more of them than he hath given them, and will not call them to account for the improvement of thoſe Talents, which he never committed to them. And if they be led into any dangerous Error, by the negligence or ill conduct of thoſe, under whoſe Care and Inſtruction the Providence of God permitted them to be placed, God will not impute it to them as a Fault; becauſe in the Circumſtances in which they were, they took the beſt and wiſeſt courſe that they could,

could, to come to the knowledge of the Truth, by being willing to learn what they could of thoſe, whom they took to be wiſer than themſelves. Serm. 4.

But for ſuch Perſons, who by the maturity of their Age, and by the natural ſtrength and clearneſs of their Underſtandings, or by the due exerciſe and improvement of them, are capable of enquiring into, and underſtanding the Grounds of their Religion, and diſcerning the difference betwixt Truth and Error (I do not mean in unneceſſary Points and matters of deepeſt Learning and Speculation, but in matters neceſſary to Salvation) it is certainly very reaſonable, that ſuch Perſons ſhould examine their Religion, and underſtand the Reaſons and Grounds of it.

And this muſt either be granted to be reaſonable; or elſe every man muſt continue in that Religion in which he happens to be fixt by Education, or for any other Reaſon to pitch

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pitch upon, when he comes to Years and makes his free Choice. For if this be a good Principle, that no Man is to examine his Religion, but take it as it is, and to believe it, and reſt ſatisfied with it; Then every Man is to remain in the Religion which he firſt lights upon, whether by Choice or the Chance of his Education. For he ought not to change but upon Reaſon; and Reaſon he can have none, unleſs he be allowed to examine his Religion and to compare it with others, that by the Compariſon he may diſcern which is beſt, and ought in reaſon to be preferred in his Choice. For to him that will not, or is not permitted to ſearch into the Grounds of any Religion, all Religions are alike; as all things are of the ſame Colour, to him that is always kept in the dark, or if he happens to come into the Light, dares not open his Eyes, and make uſe of them to diſcern the different Colours of things.

But this is evidently and at firſt ſight unreaſonable; becauſe at this rate,

rate, every Man that hath once entertained an Errour, and a falſe Religion, muſt for ever continue in it. For if he be not allowed to examine it, he can never have Reaſon to change; and to make a change without Reaſon, is certainly unreaſonable, and mere Vanity and Inconſtancy. Serm. 4.

And yet for ought I can ſee, this is the Principle which the Church of *Rome* doth with great Zeal and Earneſtneſs inculcate upon their People; diſcouraging all Doubts and Enquiries about their Religion, as Temptations of the Devil; and all Examinations of the Grounds and Reaſons of their Religion, as an inclination and dangerous ſtep towards Hereſy. For what elſe can they mean, by taking the Scriptures out of the hands of the People, and locking them up from them in an unknown Tongue; by requiring them abſolutely to ſubmit their Judgments, and to reſign them up to that which they are pleaſed to call the Catholick Church, and Implicitly to believe

lieve as She believes, tho they know not what that is? This is in Truth, to believe as their Prieſt tells them; for that is all the teaching Part of the Church, and all the Rule of Faith that the common People are acquainted with.

And it is not ſufficient to ſay in this matter, That when men are in the Truth, and of the right Religion, and in the Boſom of the true Church, they ought to reſt ſatisfied, and to examine and enquire no farther. For this is manifeſtly unreaſonable, and that upon theſe *Three* accounts.

1. Becauſe this is a plain and ſhameful begging of the thing in Queſtion; and that which every Church, and every Religion doth almoſt with equal Confidence pretend to; That Theirs is the only right Religion, and the only true Church. And theſe Pretences are all alike reaſonable to him that never examined the Grounds of any of them, nor hath compar'd them together. And therefore it is

is the vaineſt thing in the World, for the Church of *Rome* to pretend, that all Religions in the World ought to be examined, but Theirs; Becauſe Theirs, and none elſe, is the true Religion. For this which they ſay ſo confidently of it, That it is the true Religion, no Man can know till he have examined it, and ſearched into the Grounds of it, and hath conſidered the Objections which are againſt it. So that it is fond Partiality to ſay, that Their Religion is not to be examined by the people that profeſs it; but that all other Religions ought to be examined, or rather, becauſe they are different from That which they preſume to be the only true Religion, ought to be condemned at all adventures, without any farther enquiry; This I ſay is fond Partiality; becauſe every Religion and every Church may (for ought that appears to any man that is not permitted to examine things impartially) ſay the ſame for themſelves, and with as much Reaſon; and if ſo, then either every Religion ought to permit it ſelf to be examined; Serm. 4.

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mined; or elſe no man ought to examine his own Religion whatever it be; and conſequently *Jews*, and *Turks*, and *Heathens*, and *Hereticks*, ought all to continue as they are, and none of them to change; becauſe they cannot reaſonably change, without examining both that Religion which they leave, and that which they embrace inſtead of it.

2. Admitting this Pretence were true; That they are the true Church, and have the true Religion; This is ſo far from being a Reaſon why they ſhould not permit it to be examined, that on the contrary, it is one of the beſt Reaſons in the World, why they ſhould allow it to be examined, and why they may ſafely ſuffer it to be ſo. They ſhould permit it to be tryed; that men may upon good Reaſon be ſatisfied, that it is the true Religion: And they may ſafely ſuffer it to be done; becauſe, if they be ſure that the Grounds of their Religion be firm and good, I am ſure, they will be never the worſe for being examined and look'd into.

into. But I appeal to every Man's Reaſon; whether it be not an ill Sign, that they are not ſo ſure that the Grounds of their Religion are ſolid and firm, and ſuch as will abide the Tryal; that they are ſo very loth to have them ſearcht into and examined? This cannot but tempt a wiſe Man to ſuſpect, that their Church is not founded upon a Rock; and that they themſelves know ſomething that is amiſs in their Religion; which makes them ſo loth to have it try'd, and brought to the Touch. Serm. 4.

3. It is certain among all Chriſtians, that the Doctrine preached by the Apoſtles was the true Faith of Chriſt; and yet they never forbad the Chriſtians to examine whether it were ſo or not: Nay, on the contrary, they frequently exhort them to try and examine their Religion, and whether that Doctrine which they had delivered to them was the true Faith of Chriſt. So St. *Paul*; 2 *Corinth.* 13. 5. *Examine your ſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own ſelves.* And again,

1 *Theſ.*

Vol. I. 1 *Theſ.* 5. 21. *Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good*; intimating to us, that in order to the holding faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith, it is requiſite to prove and try it. And ſo likewiſe St. *John*'s Ep. 1. 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits whether they are of God; becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world.* And he gives a very notable mark, whereby we may know the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error. The Spirit of Error carries on a worldly Intereſt and Deſign; and the Doctrines of it tend to Secular Power and Greatneſs; verſ. 5. *They are of the world; therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* Acts 17. 11. St. *Luke* commends it as an argument of a more noble and generous Spirit in the *Bereans*, that they examined the Doctrine which the Apoſtles preach'd, *whether it were agreeable to the Scriptures*; and this without Diſparagement to their Infallibility; *Theſe, ſaith he, were more noble, than thoſe of Theſſalonica, in that they received the word with all readineſs of*

† *mind,*

mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. They were ready to receive the word; but not blindly, and with an implicit Faith; but using due Care to examine the Doctrines which they were taught, and to see if they were agreeable to that Divine Revelation of the Holy Scriptures, which they had before received. It seems they were not willing to admit and swallow Contradictions in their Faith. And we desire no more of the Church of *Rome*, than that they would encourage the people to *search the Scriptures daily*, and to *examine whether* their Doctrines be *according to them.* We would be glad to hear the Pope and a General Council commend to the People *the searching of the Scriptures*; and to try their Definitions of Faith and Decrees of Worship, by that Rule, to see whether what they have defined and decreed to be believed and practised, be agreeable to it; their Worship of Images; their solemn Invocation of Angels, and of the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints Serm. 4.

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departed; the Sacrament under one kind only; the publick Prayers and Service of God in an unknown Tongue; the frequent Repetition of the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Chriſt's Body and Blood in the Maſs. Had the *Bereans* been at the Council of *Trent*, and pleaded their right *to ſearch the Scriptures, whether theſe things were ſo*; I doubt they would have been thought very troubleſome and impertinent, and would not have been praiſed by the Pope and Council for their pains, as they are by St. *Luke*.

You ſee then, upon the whole matter, that it is a very groundleſs and ſuſpicious Pretence of the Church of *Rome*, that becauſe They are Infallibly in the right, and Theirs is the true Religion, therefore their people muſt not be permitted to examine it. The Doctrine of the Apoſtles was undoubtedly the true Faith of Chriſt; and yet they not only permitted the people to examine it, but exhorted and encouraged them ſo to do, and commended them for

for it: And any Man that hath the Spirit of a Man, muſt abhor to ſubmit to this Slavery, not to be allowed to examine his Religion, and to enquire freely into the Grounds and Reaſons of it; and would break with any Church in the World upon this ſingle Point; and would tell them plainly, If your Religion be too good to be Examined, I doubt it is too bad to be Believed. Serm. 4.

If it be ſaid, that the allowing of this Liberty is the way to make people perpetually doubting and unſettled; I do utterly deny this, and do on the contrary with good Reaſon affirm, that it is apt to have the contrary effect; there being in reaſon no better way to eſtabliſh any man in the belief of any thing, than to let him ſee that there are very good Grounds and Reaſons for what he believes; which no man can ever ſee, that is not permitted to examine whether there be ſuch Reaſons or not. So that beſides the Reaſonableneſs of the thing, it is of

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great benefit and advantage to us; And that upon theſe Accounts.

1. To arm us againſt Seducers. He that hath examined his Religion, and tryed the Grounds of it, is moſt able to maintain them, and make them good againſt all aſſaults that may be made upon us, to move us from our Stedfaſtneſs: Whereas he that hath not examined, and conſequently does not underſtand the Reaſons of his Religion, is liable to be *toſſed to and fro, and to be carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the ſlight of Men, and the cunning Craftineſs of thoſe that lie in wait to deceive.* For when he is attempted, he will either defend his Religion; or not: If he undertake the Defence of it, before he hath examined the Grounds of it; he makes himſelf an eaſie Prey to every crafty man that will ſet upon him; he expoſeth at once himſelf to Danger, and his Religion to Diſgrace: If he decline the defence of it; he muſt be forced to take

take Sanctuary in that Ignorant and Obſtinate Principle, That becauſe he is of an Infallible Church, and ſure that he is in the right, therefore he never did nor will examine whether he be ſo or not. But how is he, or can he be ſure, that he is in the right; if he have no other Reaſon for it, but his Confidence, and his being *wiſer in his own conceit, than Seven men that can render a Reaſon?* It is a ſhameful thing in a wiſe man, who is able to give a good Reaſon of all other Actions and parts of his Life, to be able to ſay nothing for his Religion, which concerns him more than all the reſt. Serm. 4.

2. To examine and underſtand the Grounds of our Religion, will be a good means (by the aſſiſtance of Gods Grace) to keep us conſtant to it, even under the fiery Tryal. When it comes to this, that a man muſt ſuffer for his Religion, he had need to be well eſtabliſhed in the Belief of it; which no man can ſo well be, as he that in ſome good meaſure underſtands the Grounds and

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Reaſons of his Belief. A man would be well aſſured of the Truth and Goodneſs of that, for which he would lay down his Life; otherwiſe *he dies as a Fool dies*, he knows not for what. A man would be loth to ſet ſuch a ſeal to a Blank, I mean, to that which he hath no ſufficient Ground and Reaſon to believe to be true; which, whether he hath or not, no man that hath not examined the Grounds of his Religion can be well aſſured of. This St. *Peter* preſcribes, as the beſt Preparative for ſuffering for Righteouſneſs ſake, the *1ſt.* Ep. of *Peter*, 3. 14, 15. *But if ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye; And be not afraid of their terrour, neither be troubled; But ſanctifie the Lord God in your hearts;* (that is, make him the great Object of your Dread and Truſt) *and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that asketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you.*

Secondly, The holding faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering, doth not imply, that Men ſhould ob-

obſtinately refuſe to hear any Reaſon againſt that Religion which they have embraced, and think to be the true Religion. As Men ſhould examine before they chuſe; ſo after they have choſen, they ſhould be ready to be better informed, if better Reaſon can be offered. No Man ought to think himſelf ſo infallible, as to be privileged from hearing Reaſon, and from having his Doctrines and Dictates tryed by that Teſt. Serm. 4.

Our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, the moſt Infallible Perſon that ever was in the World, and who *declared the Truth which he had heard of God*, yet He offered himſelf and his Doctrine to this Tryal. *John* 8. 46. *Which of you convinceth me of ſin?* that is, of Falſehood and Error? *And if I ſpeak the truth, why do ye not believe me?* He was ſure he ſpake the Truth; and yet for all that, if they could convince him of Error and Miſtake, he was ready to hear any Reaſon they could bring to that purpoſe. Though a Man be never ſo ſure that he is in the true Reli-

gion, and never ſo reſolved to continue conſtant and ſtedfaſt in it; yet Reaſon is always to be heard, when it is fairly offered. And as we ought always to be *ready to give an Anſwer to thoſe who ask a Reaſon of the Hope* and *Faith that is in us*; ſo ought we likewiſe to be ready to hear the Reaſons which others do fairly offer againſt our Opinion and Perſuaſion in Religion, and to debate the matter with them; that if we be in the right, and they in the wrong, we may rectifie their Miſtakes, and *inſtruct them in meekneſs, if God peradventure may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.*

We are not only to examine our Religion, before we peremptorily fix upon it; but after we are, as we think upon the beſt Reaſon, eſtabliſht and ſettled in it. Tho we ought not to doubt and waver in our Religion, upon every ſlight and trifling Objection that can be brought againſt it; yet we ought always to have an Ear open to hear Reaſon, and conſider any thing of Weight

Weight and Moment that can be offered to us about it. For it is a great Diſparagement to Truth, and argues a diſtruſt of the Goodneſs of our Cauſe and Religion, to be afraid to hear what can be ſaid againſt it; as if Truth were ſo weak, that in every Conflict it were in danger to be baffled, and run down, and go by the worſt; and as if the Reaſons, that could be brought againſt it, were too hard for it, and not to be encounter'd by thoſe Forces which Truth has on its ſide. Serm. 4.

We have that honeſt Confidence of the goodneſs of our Cauſe and Religion, that we do not fear what can be ſaid againſt it; and therefore we do not forbid our people to examine the Objections of our Adverſaries, and to read the beſt Books they can write againſt it. But the Church of *Rome* are ſo *wiſe in their Generation*, that they will not permit thoſe of their Communion to hear or read what can be ſaid againſt them: Nay, they will not permit the people the uſe of the

Holy

Vol. I. Holy Scriptures, which they, with us, acknowledge to be at leaſt an Eſſential Part of the Rule of Faith. They tell their people, that after they are once of Their Church and Religion, they ought not to hear any Reaſons againſt it; and though they be never ſo ſtrong, they ought not to entertain any doubt concerning it; becauſe all doubting is a Temptation of the Devil, and a Mortal Sin. But ſurely that Church is not to be heard, which will not hear reaſon; nor that Religion to be much admired, which will not allow thoſe that have once embrac'd it, to hear it ever after debated and examined. This is a very ſuſpicious Buſineſs, and argues, that either they have not Truth on their ſide; or that Truth is a weak, and pitiful, and ſneaking Thing, and not able to make its party good againſt Error.

I ſhould now have proceeded in the *Second* place, to ſhew *Poſitively* what is implied in *holding faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith, without wavering*;

vering; and then to have conſidered the Argument and Encouragement hereto, *Becauſe he is faithful that promiſed.* But I ſhall proceed no farther at this time. Serm. 4.

SER-

SERMON V.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

I Have already made entrance into theſe Words, which I told you do contain in them,

Firſt, An Exhortation to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering.*

Secondly, An Argument or Encouragement thereto; *becauſe he is Faithful that promiſed.* If we continue ſtedfaſt

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ſtedfaſt and faithful to God; we ſhall find him faithful to us, in making good all the Promiſes which he hath made to us; whether of Aid and Support, or of Recompence and Reward of our Fidelity to him.

I have begun to handle the *Firſt* part of the Text, *viz.* The Apoſtles Exhortation to Chriſtians to be conſtant and ſteady in their Religion: *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering.* The Word ἀκλινῆ which we render, *without wavering*, ſignifies inflexible and unmovable, not apt to waver and to be *ſhaken with every Wind of* contrary *Doctrine*, nor by the blaſts and ſtorms of Perſecution. And that we might the better comprehend the full and true meaning of this Exhortation, I propounded to do theſe *Two* things.

I. To ſhew *Negatively*, wherein this Conſtancy and Steadineſs in the Profeſſion of the true Religion doth not conſiſt. And,

II. To ſhew *Poſitively*, what is implied and intended here by the Apoſtle,

Apoſtle, in *holding faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering.* Serm. 5.

I. To ſhew *Negatively*, wherein this Conſtancy and Steadineſs in the Profeſſion of the true Religion doth not conſiſt. This I ſpake to the laſt Day; and ſhewed at large, that they are *Two* things which are not contained and intended in this Exhortation.

1. That Men ſhould not have the Liberty to examine their Religion, and to enquire into the Grounds and Reaſons of it; Such I mean as are capable of this examination and enquiry; which ſome, I ſhewed, are not; as Children, who while they are in that ſtate, are only fit to learn and believe what is taught them by their Parents and Teachers: And likewiſe ſuch grown Perſons, as either by the natural Weakneſs of their Faculties, or by ſome great Diſadvantage of Education, are of a very low and mean Capacity and Improvement of Underſtanding. Theſe are to be conſidered

ſidered, as in the condition of Children and Learners; and therefore muſt of neceſſity truſt and rely upon the judgment of others.

2. This *holding faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, does not imply, that when Men upon examination and enquiry are ſettled, as they think and verily believe in the true Religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any Reaſon that can be offer'd againſt them. Both theſe Principles I ſhew'd to be unreaſonable, and Arguments of a bad Cauſe and Religion.

I ſhall now proceed to explain the meaning of this Exhortation, to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, by ſhewing in the

Second place, what it is that is implied in the conſtant and ſteady Profeſſion of the true Faith and Religion; namely, that when upon due ſearch and examination, we are

Serm. 5.

are fully ſatisfied, that it is the true Religion which we have embraced, or as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, 1*ſt* Epiſtle, 5. 12. that *this is the true Grace of God, wherein we ſtand*; that then we ſhould adhere ſtedfaſtly to it, and *hold it faſt*, and not ſuffer it to be wreſted from us, nor our ſelves to be moved from it, by any Pretences, or Inſinuations, or Temptations whatſoever. For there is a great deal of difference between the Confidence and Stedfaſtneſs of an Ignorant Man, who hath never conſidered Things, and enquired into the Grounds of them; and the Aſſurance and Settlement of one, who hath been well inſtructed in his Religion, and hath taken pains to ſearch and examine to the bottom, the Grounds and Reaſons of what he holds and profeſſeth to believe. The firſt is meer Wilfulneſs and Obſtinacy. A Man hath entertained, and drank in ſuch Principles of Religion by Education, or hath taken them up by Chance; but he hath no Reaſon for them: and

Vol. 1. yet however he came by them, he is resolved to hold them fast, and not to part with them. The other is the Resolution and Constancy of a Wise Man. He hath embraced his Religion upon good Grounds, and he sees no Reason to alter it; and therefore is resolved to stick to it, and to *hold fast the Profession of it* stedfastly to the end. And to this purpose there are many Exhortations and Cautions scattered up and down the Writings of the holy Apostles; as that we should be *stedfast and unmoveable, established in the Truth, rooted and grounded in the Faith*, and that we should *hold fast that which is good*, and not suffer our selves *to be carried to and fro with every wind of Doctrine, through the slight of Men, and the cunning craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive*; that we should *not be removed from him that hath called us unto the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel*; that we should *stand fast in one Spirit and one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel, and be*

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in nothing terrified by our Adversaries; and that, if occasion be, we should *contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints*; and here in the Text, that we should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*. For the explaining of this, I shall do *two* Things: Serm. 5.

I. Consider *what* it is that we are to *hold fast*; namely, *the profession of our Faith*; And,

II. *How* we are to *hold it fast*, or what is implied in *holding fast the profession of our Faith, without wavering*.

I. *What* it is that we are *to hold fast*; namely, *the profession of our Faith*; i. e. of the *Christian Faith* or *Religion*: For, I told you before, that this *Profession* or *Confession of our Faith*, or *Hope* (as the word properly signifies) is an Allusion to *that Profession of Faith* which was made by all those who were admitted Members of the Christian Church by Bap-

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ptiſm; of which the Apoſtle makes mention immediately before the *Text*, when he ſays, *Let us draw near in full aſſurance of Faith, having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience, and our bodies waſhed with pure Water:* And then it follows, *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering. The Profeſſion of Faith* which we made in our Baptiſms, and which by the Ancient Fathers is call'd *the Rule of Faith*, and which is now contain'd in that which we call *the Apoſtles Creed*, and which is called by St. *Paul*, Rom. 6. 17. *the Form of Doctrine which was delivered to them*; *i. e.* to all Chriſtians; and 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. *the Form of ſound Words*; *Hold faſt*, ſaith he, *the Form of ſound Words, which thou haſt heard of me, in Faith and Love which is in Chriſt Jeſus*; and by St. *Jude*, *the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.*

So that it is the firſt and ancient Faith of the Chriſtian Church, delivered to them by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which we are here exhorted to

Serm. 5.

to *hold fast*; the necessary and fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith; and by consequence all those Truths which have a necessary Connexion with those Articles, and are implied in them, and by plain Consequence are to be deduced from them. It is not the doubtful and uncertain Traditions of Men; nor the partial Dictates and Doctrines of any Church, since the Primitive Times, which are not contained in the Holy Scriptures and the Ancient Creeds of the Christian Church, but have been since declared and imposed upon the Christian World; though with never so confident a pretence of Antiquity in the Doctrines, and of Infallibility in the Proposers of them: These are no part of *that Faith* which we are either to *profess*, or *to hold fast*; because we have no reason to admit the pretences, by virtue whereof those Doctrines or Practices are imposed; being able to make it good, and having effectually done it, that those Doctrines are not of Primitive Antiquity; and that the

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Church which proposeth them, hath no more claim to Infallibility, than all other Parts of the Christian Church; which since the Apostles time is none at all.

In a word; no other Doctrines which are not sufficiently revealed in Scripture, either in expres terms or by plain and necessary Consequence; nor any Rites of Worship, nor Matters of Practice, which are not commanded in Scripture, are to be esteemed any part of *that Faith* in Religion, *the Profession* whereof the Apostle here Commands all Christians to *hold fast without wavering*; much less any Doctrines or Practices, which are repugnant to the Word of God, and to the Faith and Practice of the first Ages of Christianity; of which kind I shall have occasion in my following Discourse to instance in several Particulars. In the mean time I shall only observe, That *that Faith* and Religion which we *profess*, and which by God's Grace we have ever *held fast*, is *that* which hath been acknowledg'd

knowledg'd by all Christian Churches in all Ages, to have been *the ancient Catholick and Apostolick Faith*, and cannot (as to any part or tittle of it) be denied to be so, even by the Church of *Rome* her self. Serm. 5.

I proceed to the

II*d* Thing which I proposed to consider; namely, *how* we are to *hold fast the profession of our Faith*, or what is implied by the Apostle, in this Exhortation, *to hold fast the profession of our Faith, without wavering*. And I think these following Particulars may very well be supposed to be implied in it.

1. That we should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support their Confidence.

2. And much more against the Confidence of Men, contrary to Scripture,

Vol. I. ture, and Reaſon, and the common Senſe of Mankind.

3. Againſt all the Temptations and Terrours of the World.

4. Againſt all vain Promiſes of being put into a ſafer Condition, and groundleſs Hopes of getting to Heaven upon eaſier terms in another Religion.

5. Againſt all the cunning Arts and Inſinuations of buſie and diſputing Men, whoſe Deſign it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to gain Proſelytes to their own Party and Faction. I ſhall go over theſe with as much Clearneſs and Brevity as I can.

1. We ſhould *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reaſon to ſupport that Confidence. All Religion is either Natural or Inſtituted. The Rule of Natural Religion is the common Reaſon of Mankind:

kind; The Rule of Inſtituted Religion is divine Revelation, or the Word of God; which all Chriſtians before the Council of *Trent* did agree to be contained in the Holy Scriptures. So that nothing can pretend to be Religion, but what can be proved to be ſo, one or both of thoſe ways; either by Scripture, or by Reaſon, or by both. And how confident ſoever Men may be of Opinions deſtitute of this Proof; any Man that underſtands the Grounds of Religion, will without any more ado reject them, for want of this proof; and notwithſtanding any pretended Authority or Infallibility of the Church that impoſeth them, will have no more Conſideration and Regard of them, than of the confident Dictates and Aſſertions of any Enthuſiaſt whatſoever; becauſe there is no reaſon to have regard to any Mans Confidence, if the Arguments and Reaſons which he brings bear no proportion to it. We ſee in Experience that Confidence is generally ill grounded, and is a kind of Paſſion in the Underſtanding, and is commonly made uſe of,

Vol. 1. of, like Fury and Force, to ſupply for the weakneſs and want of Argument. If a Man can prove what he ſays by good Argument; there is no need of Confidence to back and ſupport it. We may at any time truſt a plain and ſubſtantial Reaſon, and leave it to make its own way, and to bear out its ſelf. But if the man's Reaſons and Arguments be not good; his Confidence adds nothing of real Force to them, in the Opinion of Wiſe men, and tends only to its own Confuſion. Arguments are like Powder, which will carry and do execution according to its true ſtrength; and all the reſt is but noiſe. And generally none are ſo much to be ſuſpected of Errour, or a Deſign to deceive, as thoſe that pretend moſt confidently to Inſpiration and Infallibility: As we ſee in all ſorts of Enthuſiaſts, who pretend to Inſpiration, although we have nothing but their own word for it; for they work no Miracles; and all pretence to Inſpiration and Infallibility, without Miracle, whether it be in particular Perſons, or in whole Churches,

Churches, is Enthuſiaſtical; *i. e.* a Pretence to Inſpiration without any Proof of it. Serm. 5.

And therefore St. *Paul* was not moved by the Boaſting and Confidence of the falſe Apoſtles; becauſe they gave no Proof and Evidence of their Divine Inſpiration and Commiſſion, as he had done; for which he appeals to the Senſe of Men, Whether he had not wrought great Miracles; which the falſe Apoſtles had not done, though they had the confidence to give out themſelves to be Apoſtles as well as he; 2 Cor. 12. 11, 12. *I am* (ſays he) *become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me. And truly the ſigns of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns, and wonders, and mighty deeds.* And *Rev.* 2. 2. Chriſt there commends the Church of *Epheſus*, becauſe *ſhe had tried them, which ſaid they were Apoſtles, but were not; and had found them liars.* And as we are not to believe every one that *ſays he is an Apoſtle*, ſo neither every one that pretends

Vol. I. tends to be *a Succeſſor of the Apoſtles*, and to be endued with the ſame Spirit of Infallibility that they were: For theſe alſo, when they are *tried* whether they be *the Succeſſors of the Apoſtles* or not, may be *found Liars*. And therefore St. *John* cautions Chriſtians *not to believe every ſpirit*, (that is, every one that pretends to divine Inſpiration and the Spirit of God,) *but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God; becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the World*, 1 Joh. 4. 1. And therefore the Confidence of Men in this kind ought not to move us, when their Pretence to Infallibility is deſtitute of the proper Proof and Evidence of it, which is a Power of Miracles; and when their Doctrines and Practices have neither the Evidence of Reaſon or Scripture on their ſide.

For inſtance; *That the Church of* Rome *is the Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches*; which is one of the new Articles of Pope *Pius* the IVth's Creed; and yet there is not one ſyl-

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lable in Scripture tending to this purpose. And in Reason it cannot be, that any but that which was the first Christian Church should be the Mother of all Churches; and *that* the Church of *Rome* certainly was not, and the Church of *Jerusalem* undoubtedly was. Serm. 5.

And then *that the Bishop of* Rome, *as Successor of St.* Peter *there, is the Supreme and Universal Pastor of Christ's Church by Divine appointment*, as he assumes to himself; and *that it is necessary to Salvation, for every humane Creature to be subject to the Bishop of* Rome, as is declared in their Canon-Law by a Constitution of Pope *Boniface* the VIIIth, which Constitution is confirmed in the last *Lateran* Council; of all which there is not the least mention in Scripture, nor any divine Appointment to that purpose to be found there. And it is against Reason, that all the World should be obliged to trudge to *Rome* for the Decision of Causes and Differences, which in many and the most

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moſt weighty Matters are reſerved to the Deciſion of that See, and can be determin'd no where elſe. And againſt Reaſon likewiſe it is to found this univerſal Supremacy in his being Succeſſor of St. *Peter*; and to fix it in the Biſhop of *Rome*, rather than at *Antioch*; when it is certain, and granted by themſelves, that St. *Peter* was firſt Biſhop of *Antioch*, and out of all queſtion that he was Biſhop of *Antioch*; but not ſo, that he was Biſhop of *Rome*.

Nor is there any thing in Scripture for *the Deliverance of Souls out of Purgatory by the Prayers and Maſſes of the Living*. The whole Thing is groundleſs, and not agreeable to the conſtant Suppoſitions of Scripture concerning a future State. Nor is there any Reaſon for it, beſides that which is not fit to be given, the Wealth and Profit which it brings in.

The

Serm. 5.

The Invocation and Worſhip of the Bleſſed Virgin, and of all the Saints departed, is deſtitute of all Scripture-warrant or Example, and confeſſed by themſelves not to have been owned or practiſed in the *three firſt* Ages of the Church, becauſe it looked too like the Heathen Idolatry; which deſerves to be well conſidered by thoſe, who pretend to derive their whole Religion from Chriſt and his Apoſtles by a continued and uninterrupted Succeſſion. And this practice is likewiſe deſtitute of all colour of Reaſon; unleſs we be aſſured, that they hear our Prayers in all places; which we cannot be, unleſs they be preſent in all places; which they themſelves do not believe; or that God doth ſome way or other reveal and make known to them the Prayers which are made to them, which we cannot poſſibly be aſſured of, but by ſome Revelation of God to that purpoſe; which we no where find, nor doth the Church of *Rome* pretend to it.

But

Vol. I. But I proceed to the

2*d* Thing; namely, That we ſhould much more *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith* and Religion, againſt the Confidence of Men, contrary to Scripture, and Reaſon, and the common Senſe of Mankind. For theſe are the chief grounds of Certainty, which we can have for or againſt any thing; and if theſe be clearly on our ſide, we ought not to be much moved by the Confidence of Men, concerning any Doctrines or Practices of Religion, which are plainly contrary to theſe. If in Points wherein we have this advantage on our ſide, we do not *hold faſt the Profeſſion* of our Religion; our Error and Folly are capable of no excuſe. And this Advantage we plainly have in ſeveral Points and Controverſies betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*.

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As in *the Worſhip of Images*; which is as expreſly and clearly forbidden in the Second Commandment, and that without any Diſtinction, as any other thing is forbidden in the whole Bible. And that it is ſo forbidden in this Commandment, and that this Commandment is ſtill in force among Chriſtians, was the Univerſal Senſe of the ancient Chriſtian Church. Serm. 5.

Prayers and the Service of God in an unknown Tongue are directly contrary to the very Nature and End of religious Worſhip, which ought to be a Reaſonable Service; which it cannot be, if it be not directed by our Underſtandings, and accompanied with our Hearts and Affections: But if it be performed in an unknown Tongue, our Underſtanding can have no part in it; and if we do not underſtand it, it cannot move our Affections. And this likewiſe is plainly contrary to Scripture; namely, to a large Diſcourſe of St. *Paul's*,

Vol. I. almoſt throughout a whole *Chapter*, where he purpoſely ſets himſelf to ſhew the Unprofitableneſs and groſs Abſurdity of Praying, or Celebrating any other part of Religious Worſhip, in an unknown Tongue. If any part of *Our* Religion had been half ſo clearly condemned in Scripture, as this is, (which yet is the conſtant and general Practice of the Church of *Rome*) we muſt have *lain down in our ſhame, and confuſion would have covered us*; and we muſt either have rejected the Authority of the Bible, or have renounced that Point of our Religion, whatever it had been; though it had been dear to us as *our right Hand*, and *our right Eye*, we muſt upon ſuch plain Evidence of Scripture againſt it, have *cut it off, and plucked it out, and caſt it from us.*

The like may be ſaid of *Locking up the Scriptures from the people in an unknown Tongue*; contrary to the Command of the Scriptures themſelves, and to the great End and Deſign

Serm. 5.

ſign of Almighty God in the Writing and Publiſhing of them; and contrary to the perpetual Exhortations and Counſels of all the Ancient Fathers of the Chriſtian Church for a great many Ages, not one excepted. They are hardly more frequent, and copious, and earneſt in any Argument; than in perſwading People of all Ranks and Conditions, to the conſtant and careful Reading of the Holy Scriptures. And contrary to the common Reaſon and Senſe of Mankind. For what ſhould Men be perſwaded to be acquainted withal; if not with that which is the great Inſtrument of our Salvation? That Book which was written on purpoſe to reveal and convey to Men the Knowledge of God, and of his Will, and their Duty? What ſhould Men be allowed to know; if not that which is the beſt and moſt effectual Means, to direct and bring them to Heaven, or turn them from Sin, and to preſerve them from Eternal Miſery? When our Saviour would repreſent the beſt and moſt

Vol. I. effectual Means of bringing Men to Happineſs, and ſaving them from the eternal Torments of Hell, in the Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, He brings in *Abraham*, giving the beſt Advice he could to the Rich Man who was in Hell, concerning his Brethren that were upon Earth, how they might prevent their *coming into that place of Torment*; and he directs them to the Scriptures, as the beſt and moſt effectual Means to that purpoſe: *They have* (ſays he) *Moſes and the Prophets: Let them hear them.*

Now if in the Church of God among the *Jews*, the ſame Courſe had been taken, that is now in the Church of *Rome*; the Rich Man might, and in all Reaſon ought to have replyed, *Nay, Father* Abraham; *But they have not Moſes and the Prophets, nor are they permitted to Read them in a Language that they can underſtand; and therefore this Advice is of no Uſe to them:* And then he might with Reaſon

Reaſon have preſs'd him, as he did, that *one might be ſent to them from the Dead, to teſtifie unto them.* But it appears, that *Abraham* was very poſitive and peremptory in this Advice; and that he prefers the Knowledge of the Scriptures, to any other Way and Means, that could be thought of; and that if this had not its Effect to perſwade Men to Repentance, and to preſerve them from Hell, he did not know any thing elſe, that was ſo likely to do it: For he concludes, *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets; neither will they be perſwaded tho' One roſe from the Dead.* And this is the Concluſion of the Parable; which plainly ſhews, what was the main Scope and Deſign of our Saviour in it; namely, to recommend to us the Uſe of the Holy Scriptures, as the beſt and moſt effectual Means, which the Wiſdom of God hath provided for the Salvation of Mankind.

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And now any Man would be apt to think, that the declared Judgment of our Saviour in the Caſe, ſhould go a great way, even with the moſt infallible Church in the World. However this we muſt ſay, that it is in truth a very hard caſe, to which the Church of *Rome* hath reduced Men; that it will neither allow them Salvation out of their Church, nor the beſt and moſt effectual Means of Salvation, when they are in it. I might ſay much more upon this Head; but this I hope may be ſufficient.

The next inſtance ſhall be in the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; which is contrary to the Scriptures, which after Conſecration ſo frequently call the Elements *Bread and Wine*; and which, without Reaſon or Neceſſity, puts an abſurd and impoſſible Senſe upon thoſe words of our Saviour, *This is my Body*; which do no more prove *Tranſubſtantiation*; than thoſe words, *This Cup is the new Teſtament*, do

do prove that the material Cup which was uſed in the Sacrament, was ſubſtantially changed into the New Teſtament; and no more, than thoſe Texts which affirm God to have Eyes, and Ears, and Hands, do prove that he really hath ſo. But beſides the Contrariety of this Doctrine to Scripture, nothing can be more repugnant to Reaſon. It is ſo big with Contradictions, and ſo ſurfeited of Impoſſibilities, that it would be Endleſs to reckon them up. And beſides all this, it plainly contradicts the clear and conſtant Evidence of *four* of our *five* Senſes; which whoever contradicts, undermines the Foundation of all Certainty. Serm. 5.

And then *the Communion in one kind* is plainly contrary to our Saviour's Inſtitution of the Sacrament in both kinds; as they themſelves acknowledge. And therefore the Council of *Conſtance*, being ſenſible of this, was forced to Decree it with an expreſs *Non obſtante* to the

Vol. I. Inſtitution of Chriſt, and the Practice of the Apoſtles and the Primitive Church. And their Doctrine of *Concomitancy* (as if the Blood were in the Fleſh, and together with it) will not help the matter: Becauſe in the Sacrament Chriſt's Body is repreſented as broken, and pierced, and exhauſted, and drain'd of its Blood; and his Blood is repreſented as ſhed and poured out; ſo that one Kind can by no means contain and exhibit both.

The next inſtance is, *the Repetition of Chriſt's Propitiatory Sacrifice in the Maſs*, ſo often as That is celebrated: Againſt all Reaſon; becauſe the Sacrifice of Chriſt once offered upon the Croſs, was a full and perfect Propitiation fot the Sins of the whole World; and therefore ought not, becauſe it needs not, to be again repeated for that End, in any manner whatſoever. And it is directly contrary to the main Scope of a great part of this *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, which ſhews the Excel-

lency

lency of the Goſpel above the Law in this reſpect, That the Expiatory Sacrifice of the Goſpel was offered *once for all*; whereas the Sacrifices of the Law were perpetually repeated. *Chap.* 7. 27. Speaking of Chriſt; *who needs not daily, as thoſe High-prieſts, to offer up Sacrifices; firſt for his own Sins, and then for the Peoples: for this he did once, when he offered up himſelf.* Chap. 9. 26. *But once in the End of the World hath he appeared, to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf: And as it is appointed for all Men once to dye; ſo Chriſt was once offered to bear the Sins of many.* And Chap. 10. 10. *By the which Will we are ſanctified, through the Offering of the Body of Jeſus Chriſt once for all:* And Verſe the 12. *But this Man, after he had offered one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever ſat down on the right hand of God.* And Verſe the 14. *For by one Offering he hath perfected for ever them that are ſanctified.* There cannot be plainer Texts for any thing in the Bible, than that this Propitia-

Serm. 5.

Vol. I. Propitiatory Sacrifice was never to be repeated.

And whereas they ſay, that *the Sacrifice of the Maſs is an unbloody Sacrifice:* This, inſtead of bringing them off, doth but intangle the Matter more. For if Blood be offered in the Sacrifice of the Maſs, how is it an unbloody Sacrifice? What can be more bloody than Blood? And if Blood be not offered; how is it Propitiatory? Since the Apoſtle lays it down for a Certain Rule, That *without ſhedding of Blood, there is no Remiſſion* of Sins: *i. e.* There can be no Propitiation for the Sins of the Living or the Dead, which the Church of *Rome* affirms there is.

I might have added one or two Inſtances more; and then ſhould have proceeded to ſhew, in the *Third* place, That we are to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, againſt all the Temptations and Terrors of the World; which

which is more eſpecially and principally here intended by the Apoſtle in this Exhortation. Serm. 5.

But I ſhall proceed no farther at preſent.

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SERMON VI.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

The Third Sermon on this Text.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promiſed.

IN theſe words, I have told you, are contained

Firſt, An Exhortation to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith*, or *hope*, *without wavering*.

Secondly, An Argument or Encouragement thereto; *becauſe he is Faithful that promiſed*. I am yet upon the *firſt* of

of theſe; the Exhortation to Chriſtians, to be Conſtant and Steady in the Profeſſion of their Religion; *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering.* And that we might the better comprehend the true and full meaning of this Exhortation, I ſhewed,

Firſt, Negatively, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned theſe *two* Particulars.

1. The Apoſtle doth not hereby intend, that thoſe who are capable of enquiring into, and examining the Grounds of their Religion, ſhould not have the Liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due Enquiry and Examination, Men are ſettled, as they think and verily believe, in the true Faith and Religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any Reaſon that can be offered againſt their preſent Perſuaſion. Both theſe I ſhewed to be unreaſonable, and Argu-

Arguments of a bad Cauſe and Religion: And therefore neither of them can be intended by the Apoſtle in this Exhortation. Serm. 6.

Secondly, I proceeded *Poſitively* to explain the meaning of this Exhortation. And to this purpoſe I propoſed,

I. To conſider *what* it is, that we are to *hold faſt*, viz. *the Confeſſion* or *Profeſſion of our Faith.* The ancient Chriſtian Faith, of which every Chriſtian makes *Profeſſion* in his Baptiſm: For of that the Apoſtle here ſpeaks, as appears by the Context; not the doubtful and uncertain Traditions of Men, nor the imperious Dictates and Doctrines of any Church, not contained in the Holy Scriptures, impoſed upon the Chriſtian Church; tho with never ſo confident a pretence of the Antiquity of the Doctrines propoſed, or of the Infallibility of the Propoſers of them. And then I proceeded in the

II. Place,

Vol. I. II. Place, to ſhew *how* we are *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our faith without wavering*. And I mentioned theſe following Particulars, as probably implied in the Apoſtles Exhortation.

1. That we ſhould *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reaſon to ſupport their Confidence.

2. And much more againſt the Confidence of Men, againſt Scripture and Reaſon, and the common Senſe of Mankind.

3. Againſt all the Temptations and Terrours of the World.

4. Againſt all vain Promiſes of being put into a ſafer Condition, and groundleſs Hopes of getting to Heaven upon eaſier Terms, in another Religion.

5. Againſt all the cunning Arts and Inſinuations of buſie and diſputing Men, whoſe Deſign it is to unhinge Men from

from their Religion, and to gain Proſelytes to their Party and Faction. Serm. 6.

1. We are *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reaſon to ſupport their Confidence. And of this I gave ſeveral Inſtances. As in the Pretence of the Church of *Rome* to *Infallibility*, without any Proof or Evidence of it, either by Scripture or Miracles: I mean ſuch Miracles, as are ſufficiently atteſted. For as for their Legends, ſince the wiſeſt among themſelves give no credit to them, I hope, they do not expect that We ſhould believe them, or be moved by them. And then their Pretence that *the Church of* Rome *is the Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches*; which is now made an Article of their *Creed*. And that *the Biſhop of* Rome, *as Succeſſor of Saint* Peter *there, is by Divine Appointment the Supream and Univerſal Paſtor of Chriſt's Church*. And that *it is*

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neceſſary to Salvation, for every humane Creature to be ſubject to him. And laſtly, *their Invocation and Worſhip of the Bleſſed Virgin, and Saints departed*; without any Warrant or Example of any ſuch thing, either in Scripture, or in the practice of the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Religion; and without ſufficient Ground to believe that they hear the Prayers which are put up to them.

2. Much more are we *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt the Confidence of Men, contrary to Scripture and Reaſon and the common Senſe of Mankind. And here I inſtanced in *the Worſhip of Images*; *the Locking up of the Scriptures from the People*; *and celebrating the publick Prayers and Service of God in an unknown Tongue*; in their Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; their *Communion in one kind*; and their *daily repetition, in the Sacrifice of the Maſs, of the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Chriſt*; which was offered *once for all*, and is of eternal Virtue

tue and Efficacy, and therefore ought not, becauſe it needs not, like *Jewiſh* Sacrifices under the Law, to be repeated. Serm. 6. W

To theſe Inſtances, which I have already ſpoken to, I ſhall add *one* or *two* more; as namely, That *to the due Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, an Intention in the Miniſter at leaſt to do what the Church does, is requiſite.* This is expreſly defined, and under an *Anathema* upon all that ſhall ſay otherwiſe, by the Council of *Trent*, *Seſſ.* the *Seventh*, *Can.* 11*th*; which is to make the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments to depend upon the Intention of the Prieſt or Miniſter. So that if in the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm, he do not intend to Baptize the Party he pretends to Baptize, then it is no Baptiſm, and conſequently the Perſon Baptized is not made a Member of Chriſt's Church; nor is any Grace or ſpecial Benefit conferred upon him; nor is he a Chriſtian. So likewiſe in the Sacrament of the Lord's

Vol. 1. Supper, if the Prieſt do not intend to Conſecrate the Hoſt, then is it no Sacrament; and they that receive it, receive no benefit by it; and (which according to their Opinion is a dreadful Conſequence) by the words of Conſecration, there is no change made of the Elements into the Body and Blood of Chriſt, and conſequently they that give Adoration to the Sacrament in ſuch Caſes, Worſhip Bread and Wine, for God; which is Idolatry. And ſo likewiſe in their Sacrament of Penance, though the Prieſt Pronounce the words of Abſolution; yet if he do not intend to abſolve the Penitent; though he be never ſo truly penitent, and God on his part is ready to forgive him; yet if the Prieſt do not intend to do ſo, there is nothing done, and the Man is ſtill in his Sin. So likewiſe in Ordination, (which is another of their Sacraments) if the Biſhop do not intend to ordain the Man; he is no Prieſt, and all that he does as a Prieſt afterwards, either in Adminiſtration of Baptiſm, or the Lord's Supper, or

or the Abſolution of Penitents, all is vain, and of no effect. Nay, in Marriage, (which they will needs have to be a Sacrament too) if the Intention of the Prieſt be wanting; there is nothing done, the Contract is null'd, and they that are ſo Married do really live in Adultery; though they do not know it, nor have any ſuſpicion of it. Serm. 6.

Now this is contrary to Scripture and the whole Tenour of the Goſpel, which promiſeth the benefit and efficacy of the Sacraments, to all thoſe that perform the Conditions of the Covenant which are required on their parts, and declares forgiveneſs of Sins to thoſe who confeſs them to God, and truly repent of them.

And there is not the leaſt intimation given in the Bible, that the Virtue and efficacy of the Sacraments does depend upon the Intention of him that adminiſters them; or that the Forgiveneſs of ſins is ſuſpended upon the Intention or Abſolution of

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the Prieſt; but only upon the ſincere Reſolution of the Penitent. And ſurely nothing can be more abſurd, and contrary to Reaſon, than that when Men have performed all the Conditions which the Goſpel requires; yet they ſhould notwithſtanding this be deprived of all the Bleſſings and Benefits which God hath promiſed, and intends to confer upon them; becauſe the Prieſt hath not the ſame Intention. So that when a Man hath done all he can to *work out his own Salvation*, he ſhall be never the nearer; only for want of That which is wholly out of his Power; the right Intention of the Prieſt.

Beſides, that after all their Boaſts of the ſafe Condition of Men in Their Church, and the moſt certain and infallible means of Salvation to be had in it; this one Principle (that the Intention of the Prieſt is neceſſary to the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments) puts the Salvation of Men upon the greateſt Hazard and

and Uncertainty; and ſuch as it is impoſſible for any Man either to diſcover or prevent, unleſs he had ſome certain way to know the Heart and Intention of the Prieſt. For upon theſe terms. who can know whether any Man be a Prieſt, and really ordained; or not? Nay, whether he be a Chriſtian, and have been truly baptized; or not? and conſequently whether any of his Adminiſtrations be valid, and we have any Benefit and Advantage by them? Becauſe all this depends upon the knowledge of that, which we neither do nor can know. Serm. 6

So that when a Man hath conſcientiouſly done all that God requires of any Man, to make him capable of Salvation; yet without any Fault of his, the want of Intention in an idle-minded Man may fruſtrate all: And though the Man have been baptized, and do truly believe the Goſpel, and hath ſincerely repented of his ſins, and lived a moſt Holy Life; yet all this may ſignifie

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nothing, and after all he may be no Chriſtian; becauſe his Baptiſm was invalid: And all the Promiſes of God to the means of Salvation which his Goodneſs and Wiſdom hath preſcribed, may be of no Efficacy; if the Prieſt do not intend in the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments to do that which God and the Church intend.

Now if this be true; there is certainly no Church in the World, in which the Salvation of Men runs ſo many hazards; and yet all this hazard and uncertainty has its riſe, from a Scholaſtical Point, which is directly contrary to all the Notions of Mankind concerning the Goodneſs of God, and to the clear Reaſon of the thing, and to the conſtant Tenor of the Goſpel; and which was never aſſerted by any of the ancient Fathers; much leſs defined by any Council before that of *Trent*: So that it is a Doctrine new and needleſs, and in the neceſſary conſequences of it unreaſonable and abſurd to the utmoſt degree. The

The laſt inſtance I ſhall mention, is *their Rule of Faith.* The Rule of Faith univerſally received and acknowledged by the Chriſtian Church in all Ages, before the Council of *Trent*, was the Word of God, contained in the Canonical Books of Holy Scripture; which were therefore by the Church called *Canonical*, becauſe they were the Rule of Faith and Manners, of the Doctrines to be believed, and the Duties to be practiſed by all Chriſtians. But when the Errours and Corruptions of the *Romiſh* Church were grown to the heighth, and the Pope and his Council at *Trent* were reſolved not to Retrench and Reform them, they ſaw it neceſſary to enlarge and lengthen out their Rule; becauſe the ancient Rule of the Holy Scriptures would by no means reach ſeveral of the Doctrines and Practices of that Church, which they were reſolved to maintain and make good by one means or other: As namely, the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; of *Purgatory*; and of *the Seven Sacraments:* Serm. 6.

craments: and the practice of *the Worſhip of Saints, and Images*; of *the Scriptures, and the Service of God in an unknown Tongue*; of *Indulgences*; and *the Communion in one kind*; and ſeveral other ſuperſtitious Practices in uſe among them.

Now to enlarge their Rule to the beſt advantage for the Juſtification of theſe Doctrines and Practices, they took theſe *two* ways.

Firſt, They have added to the *Canonical* Books of the Old Teſtament, which were received by the *Jewiſh* Church (to whom *were committed the Oracles of God*) I ſay to theſe they have added ſeveral *Apocryphal* Books, not warranted by Divine Inſpiration, becauſe they were written after Prophecy and Divine Inſpiration was ceaſed in the *Jewiſh* Church; *Malachi* being the laſt of their Prophets, according to the general Tradition of that Chnrch. But becauſe the addition of theſe Books did not make a Rule of Faith and Practice large

large enough for their purpoſe; in imitation of the *Jews*, in the time of the greateſt Confuſion and Degeneracy of that Church, they added in the Serm. 6.

Second Place to their Books of Scripture, which they call *the written Word*, an *unwritten Word*, which they call *Oral Tradition* from Chriſt and his Apoſtles; which they declare to be of equal Authority with the Holy Scriptures themſelves; and that it ought to be received with the ſame Pious Veneration and Affection: Of which Traditions, They being the Keepers and Judges, they may extend them to what they pleaſe, and having them in their own Breaſts, they may declare whatever they have a mind to, to have been a conſtant and univerſal Tradition of their Church; tho it is evident to common Senſe, that nothing can be more uncertain, and more liable to Alteration and Miſtake, than *Tradition*, at the diſtance of ſo many

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ny Ages, brought down by word of mouth, without writing, and paſſing through ſo many hands. He that can think theſe to be of equal Certainty and Authority with what is delivered by Writing, and brought down by Books, undertakes the defence of a ſtrange *Paradox*. viz. That *general Rumour and Report of things ſaid and done* 1500 *Years ago, is of equal Authority and Credit with a Record, and a witten Hiſtory.*

By which proceeding of the Council of *Trent* concerning the Rule of Faith and Practice; it is very evident that they had no mind to bring their Faith to the Ancient Rule, the Holy Scriptures. That they knew could not be done; and therefore they were reſolved to fit their Rule to their Faith. And this Foundation being laid in their firſt Decree, all the reſt would afterwards go on very ſmoothly. For do but give Men the making of their Rule, and they can make good

good any thing by it. And accordingly the Council of *Trent* having thus fixt and fitted a Rule to their own purpoſe; in the Concluſion of that Decree, they give the World fair warning, upon what Grounds, and in what Ways they intend to proceed in their following Decrees of Practice, and Definitions of Faith. *Omnes itaque intelligant, quo ordine & viâ ipſa Synodus poſt jactum fidei confeſſionis fundamentum ſit progreſſura,* &c. *Be it known therefore to all men, in what Order and Way the Synod, after having laid this Foundation of the Confeſſion of Faith, will proceed; and what Teſtimonies and Proofs ſhe chiefly intends to make uſe of, for the Confirmation of Doctrines, and Reformation of Manners in the Church.* And no doubt all Men do ſee very plainly, to what purpoſe this Foundation is laid of ſo large a Rule of Faith. And this being admitted, how eaſie is it for them to confirm and prove whatever Doctrines and Practices they have a mind to eſtabliſh? Serm. 6.

But

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But if this be a *new*, and *another Foundation*, than *That* which the Great Author and Founder of our Religion, hath laid and built his Church upon, (*viz.*) *the Foundation of the Prophets and Apoſtles*; it is no matter what they build upon it. And if they go about to prove any thing by the new parts of this Rule; by the *Apocryphal* Books which they have added to the ancient *Canon* of the Scriptures, brought down to us by the general Tradition of the Chriſtian Church; and by their pretended unwritten Traditions: we do with Reaſon reject this kind of Proof, and deſire them firſt to prove their *Rule*, before they pretend to prove any thing by it: For we proteſt againſt this Rule, as never declared and owned by the Chriſtian Church, nor proceeded upon by the ancient Fathers of the Church, nor by any Council whatſoever, before the Council of *Trent*.

In vain then doth the Church of *Rome* vaunt it ſelf of the Antiquity

quity of their Faith and Religion; when the very Foundation and Rule of it is but of Yesterday; a new thing, never before known or heard of in the Christian World: Whereas the Foundation and Rule of *Our* Religion is the Word of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures; to which Christians in all Ages have appealed, as the *only Rule* of Faith and Life. Serm. 6.

I proceed now to the

3. Thing I proposed, *viz.* that we are *to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, against all the Temptations and Terrors of the World. And this seems more especially and principally to be here intended by the Apostle in this Exhortation.

I shall first speak of the Temptations of the World. And they are chiefly these *Two*; the Temptation of *Fashion* and *Example*: And of *worldly Interest* and *Advantage*.

1. Of

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1. Of *Faſhion and Example.* This in Truth and Reality is no ſtrong Argument; and yet in Experience and Effect it is often found to be very powerful. It is frequently ſeen, that this hath many times too great an Influence upon weak and fooliſh Minds. Men are apt to be carried down with the Stream, and to *follow a Multitude* in that which is *evil.* But more eſpecially Men are prone to be ſwayed by great Examples; and to bend themſelves to ſuch an Obſequiouſneſs to their Superiors and Betters, that in compliance with them, they are ready not only to change their Affection to Perſons and Things, as *They* do; but even their Judgment alſo; and that in the greateſt and weightieſt Matters, even in Matters of Religion, and the great concernments of another World. But this ſurely is an Argument of a poor and mean Spirit, and of a weak Underſtanding, which leans upon the Judgment of another, and is in truth the loweſt degree of Servility,

vility, that a reaſonable Creature can ſtoop to; and even beneath That of a Slave, who in the midſt of his Chains and Fetters doth ſtill retain the Freedom of his Mind and Judgment. Serm. 6.

But I need not to urge this upon conſiderate Perſons, who know better how to value their Duty and Obligation to God, than to be tempted to do any thing contrary thereto, meerly in compliance with *Faſhion* and *Example*. There are ſome Things in Religion ſo very plain, that a wiſe and good Man would ſtand alone in the Belief and Practice of them, and not be moved in the leaſt by the contrary Example of the whole World. It was a brave Reſolution of *Joſhua*; though all Men ſhould forſake the God of *Iſrael*, and run aſide to other Gods, yet he would not do it, *Joſhua* 24. 15. *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord; chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve: But as for me and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* It was well reſolved

of *Peter*, if he had not been too confident of his own Strength, when he said to our Saviour, *Though all Men forsake thee, yet will not I.*

2. Another sort of Temptation, and which is commonly more Powerful than *Example*, is *worldly Interest* and *Advantage*. This is a mighty Bait to a great part of Mankind, and apt to work very strongly upon the Necessities of some, and upon the Covetousness and Ambition of others. Some Men are tempted by Necessity, which many times makes them do ugly and reproachful Things, and like *Esau*, *for a Morsel of Meat to sell their Birth-right*, and *Blessing*. Covetousness tempts others to be of that Religion which gives them the prospect of the greatest Earthly Advantage, either for the increasing or securing of their Estates. When they find that they *cannot serve God and Mammon*; they will *forsake the one, and cleave to*

to the other. This was one of the great Temptations to many in the Primitive Times, and a frequent Cauſe of Apoſtacy from the Faith; an eager Deſire of Riches, and too great a Value for them; as St. *Paul* obſerves, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. 10. *But they that will be Rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown Men in Deſtruction and Perdition. For the Love of Many is the Root of all evil; which while ſome have coveted after, they have erred*, or been ſeduced *from the Faith, and pierced themſelves through with many Sorrows.* This was the Temptation which drew off *Demas* from his Religion, as St. *Paul* tells us, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. *Demas hath forſaken me, having loved this preſent World.* Serm. 6.

Ambition is likewiſe a great Temptation to proud and aſpiring Minds, and makes many Men falſe to their Religion, when they find it a hinderance to their Preferment; and they are eaſily perſwa-

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ded, that That is the beſt Religion, which is attended with the greateſt world Advantages, and will raiſe them to the higheſt Dignity. The Devil underſtood very well the Force of this Temptation, when he ſet upon our Saviour, and therefore reſerv'd it for the laſt Aſſault. *He ſhewed him all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them; and ſaid to him, All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.* And when he ſaw this would not prevail, he gave him over in deſpair, and left him. But though this be a very dazling Temptation; yet there are Conſiderations of that Weight to be ſet over againſt it, from the Nature of Religion, and the infinite Concernment of it to our immortal Souls, as is ſufficient *to quench this fiery Dart of the Devil*, and to put all the Temptations of this World out of Countenance, and to render all the Riches and Glory of it, in compariſon of the Eternal Happineſs and Miſery of the other

other World, *but as the very ſmall Duſt upon the Balance.* What Temptation of this World can ſtand againſt that Argument of our Saviour, if it be ſeriouſly weighed and conſidered; *What is a Man profited; if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? or what ſhall a Man give in in exchange for his Soul?* If we would conſider Things impartially, and weigh them in a juſt and equal Balance; the Things which concern our Bodies, and this preſent Life, are of no Conſideration, in compariſon of the great and vaſt Concernments of our immortal Souls, and the happy or miſerable Condition of our Bodies and Souls to all Eternity. Serm. 6.

And Religion is a Matter of this vaſt Concernment; and therefore not to be bargained away and parted with by us for the greateſt Things this World can offer. There is no greater ſign of a ſordid Spirit, than to put a high Va-

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lue upon Things of little Worth; and no greater mark of Folly, than to make an unequal Bargain, to part with Things of greateſt Price, for a ſlender and trifling Conſideration: As if a Man of great Fortune and Eſtate, ſhould ſell the Inheritance of it for a Picture; which when he hath it, will not perhaps yield ſo much as will maintain him for one Year. The Folly is ſo much the greater, in Things of infinitely greater Value; as for a Man to quit God and Religion, to ſell the Truth and his Soul, and to part with his Everlaſting Inheritance, for a convenient Service; for a good Cuſtomer, and ſome preſent Advantage in his Trade and Profeſſion, or indeed for any Condition which the fooliſh Language of this World calls *a high Place*, or *a great Preferment*. The Things which theſe Men part with upon theſe cheap Terms, God, and his Truth, and Religion, are to thoſe who underſtand themſelves, and the juſt Value of their Immor-

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tal Souls, Things of ineſtimable Worth, and not to be parted with by a conſiderate Man, for any Price that this World can bid. And thoſe who are to be bought out of their Religion, upon ſuch low Terms, and ſo eaſily parted from it, 'tis much to be feared that they have little or no Religion to *hold faſt*. Serm. 6.

Secondly, As we are to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, againſt the Temptations and Allurements of this World; ſo likewiſe againſt the Terrors of it.

Fear is a Paſſion of great force; and, if Men be not very reſolute and conſtant, will be apt to ſtagger them, and *to move them from their ſtedfaſtneſs*. And therefore when the Caſe of Suffering and Perſecution for the Truth happens, we had need *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*. Our Saviour in the Parable of the Sower tells us, that there were many *that heard the Word, and with joy received it: but when Per-*

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And though, bleſſed be God, this be not now our Caſe; yet there was a Time when it was the general Caſe of Chriſtians, in the firſt beginning of Chriſtianity, and for ſeveral Ages after, though with ſome Intermiſſion and Intervals of Eaſe. It was then a general Rule, and the common Expectation of Chriſtians, That *through many Tribulations they muſt enter into the Kingdom of God*; and that *if any Man will live Godly in Chriſt Jeſus, he muſt ſuffer Perſecution.* And in ſeveral Ages ſince thoſe Primitive Times, the ſincere Profeſſors of Religion have, in divers places, been expoſed to moſt grievous Sufferings and Perſecutions for the Truth. And even at this day, in ſeveral Places, the faithful Servants of God are exerciſed with the ſharpeſt and ſoreſt Tryals that perhaps were ever heard of in any Age;

Age; and for the ſake of God, and the conſtant Profeſſion of his true Religion, are *tormented and killed, all the day long, and are accounted as Sheep for the ſlaughter.* It is Their hard Lot to be called to theſe cruel and bitter Sufferings; and Our happy Oportunity to be called upon for their Relief; Thoſe of them, I mean, that have eſcaped that terrible Storm and Tempeſt, and have taken Refuge and Sanctuary here among us, and out of His Majeſty's great Humanity and Goodneſs are by his Publick Letters recommended to the Charity of the whole Nation, by the Name of *Diſtreſſed Proteſtants.* Serm. 6.

Let us conſider how much eaſier Our Lot and Our Duty is, than Theirs; as much as it is eaſier to compaſſionate the Sufferings, and to relieve the Diſtreſſes of Others, than to be ſuch Sufferers, and in ſuch Diſtreſs Our Selves. Let us make Their Caſe our Own; and then we our ſelves will be the beſt Judges, how it is fit for us to demean our ſelves towards

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wards them, and to what degree we ought to extend our Charity and Compaſſion to them. Let us put on their Caſe and Circumſtances; and ſuppoſe that We were the Sufferers, and had fled to Them for Refuge: the ſame Pity and Commiſeration, the ſame tender Regard and Conſideration of our ſad Caſe, the ſame liberal and effectual Relief, that we ſhould deſire and expect, and be glad to have ſhewn and afforded to our ſelves, let us give to them; and then I am ſure they will want no fitting Comfort and Support from us.

We enjoy (bleſſed be the Goodneſs of God to us) great Peace and Plenty, and Freedom from Evil and Suffering: And ſurely one of the beſt Means, to have theſe Bleſſings continued to us, and our *Tranquility prolonged*, is, to conſider and relieve thoſe who want the Bleſſings which we enjoy; and the readieſt way to provoke

voke God to deprive us of these Blessings, is, to *shut up the Bowels of our Compassion from* our Distressed *Brethren.* God can easily change the Scene, and make our Sufferings, if not in the same kind, yet in one kind or other equal to theirs, and then we shall *remember the Afflictions of Joseph,* and say as his Brethren did, when they fell into Trouble, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this Distress come upon us.* Serm. 6.

God alone knows what Storms the Devil may yet raise in the World, before the End of it: And therefore it concerns all Christians, in all Times and Places, who have taken upon them the Profession of Christ's Religion, to consider well before-hand, and to calculate the Dangers and Sufferings it may expose them to, and to arm our selves with Resolution and

and Patience againſt the fierceſt Aſſaults of Temptation; conſidering the Shortneſs of all Temporal Afflictions and Sufferings, in compariſon of the Eternal and Glorious Reward of them; and the Lightneſs of them too, in compariſon of the endleſs and intolerable Torments of another World; to which every Man expoſeth himſelf, who forſakes God, and renounceth his Truth, and wounds his Conſcience, to avoid Temporal Sufferings.

And though *Fear* in many Caſes, eſpecially if it be of Death and extream Suffering, be a great Excuſe for ſeveral Actions; becauſe it may, *Cadere in conſtantem virum*, happen to a reſolute Man: Yet in this caſe, of Renouncing our Religion (unleſs it be very ſudden and ſurprizing, out of which a Man recovers himſelf when he comes to himſelf (as St. *Peter* did;) or the Suffering be ſo extream, as to put a Man beſides himſelf for the

the time, ſo as to make him ſay or do any thing;) I ſay in this caſe of Renouncing God and his Truth, God will not admit *Fear* for a juſt excuſe of our Apoſtacy; which, if it be unrepented of, (and the Scripture ſpeaks of Repentance in that caſe as very difficult) will be our Ruin. And the Reaſon is; becauſe God has given us ſuch fair Warning of it, that we may be prepared for it, in the Reſolution of our Minds: And we enter into Religion upon theſe Terms, with a profeſſed Expectation of Suffering, and a firm Purpoſe to lay down our Lives for the Truth, if God ſhall call us to it. *If any Man will be my Diſciple*, ſays our Lord, *let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow me*: And again, *He that loveth Life it ſelf more than me, is not worthy of me*: *And if any Man be aſhamed of me, and of my Words, in this unfaithful Generation; of him will I be aſhamed before my Father and the Holy Angels.* Serm. 6.

And

Vol. I. And therefore to master and subdue this *Fear*, our Saviour hath propounded great Objects of Terror to us, and a Danger infinitely more to be dreaded, which every Man runs himself wilfully upon, who shall quit the Profession of his Religion, to avoid Temporal Sufferings; *Luke* 12. 4, 5. *Fear not them that can kill the Body, but after that have nothing that they can do: But I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear him, who after he hath killed, can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell; Yea, I say unto you, Fear him.* And to this dreadful Hazard every Man exposeth himself, who, for the Fear of Men, ventures thus to offend God. These are *the Fearful and Unbelievers* spoken of by St. *John*, *who shall have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.*

Thus you see how we are to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without*

without wavering, againſt all Temptations and Terrors of this World. Serm. 6.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the next particular; namely, that we are to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt all vain Promiſes of being put into a ſafer Condition, and groundleſs Hopes of getting to Heaven upon eaſier Terms, in ſome other Church and Religion.

But this I ſhall not now enter upon.

SER-

SERMON VII.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering: for he is faithful that promiſed.

IN theſe Words, I have told you, are contained theſe *Two* Parts:

Firſt, An Exhortation to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith, without wavering.*

Secondly, An Argument or Encouragement thereto; *Becauſe he is Faithful that hath promiſed.* I am yet upon the

Firſt of theſe, the Exhortation to Chriſtians, to be conſtant and Steady in the Profeſſion of their Religion; *Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering:* And that we might the

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better comprehend the true and full meaning of this Exhortation, I shewed,

I. *Negatively*, what is not meant and intended by it; and I mentioned these *Two* Particulars:

1. The Apostle doth not hereby intend, that those who are capable of enquiring into, and examining the Grounds and Reasons of their Religion, should not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due Enquiry and Examination, Men are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the True Faith and Religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any Reason that can be offered against their present Persuasion: for Reason when it is fairly offered is always to be heard. I proceeded in the

II. Place, *Positively* to explain the Meaning of this Exhortation: And to this purpose I proposed to consider,

First, *What* it is that we are to hold fast; *viz.* *the Confession* or *Profession of our Faith*; The Ancient Christian Faith which every Christian makes Profession of in his Baptism: Not the Doubtful and Uncertain Traditions of Men, nor the Imperious Dictates and Doctrines

ctrines of any Church (which are not contained in the Holy Scriptures) imposed upon the Christian World, though with never so confident a Pretence of the Antiquity of the Doctrines, or of the Infallibility of the Proposers of them. And then I proceeded, in the Serm. 7.

Second Place, to shew *how* we are *to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*; and I mentioned these following Particulars, as probably implied and comprehended in the Apostles Exhortation.

1. That we should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith* against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support that Confidence.

2. And much more against the Confidence of Men, contrary to plain Scripture, and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind; under both which Heads I gave several Instances of Doctrines and Practices imposed with great Confidence upon the World, some without, and others plainly against Scripture, and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind.

3. Against all the Temptations and Terrors of the World; the Temptations of Fashion and Example, and of

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worldly Intereſt and Advantage; and againſt the Terrors of Perſecution and Suffering for the Truth. Thus far I have gone. I ſhall now proceed to the *Two* other Particulars which remain to be ſpoken to.

4. We are to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt all vain Promiſes of being put into a ſafer Condition, and groundleſs Hopes of getting to Heaven upon eaſier Terms, in ſome other Church and Religion. God hath plainly declared to us in the holy Scriptures, upon what Terms and Conditions we may obtain Eternal Life and Happineſs, and what will certainly exclude us from it; That *except we repent*, (i. e.) without true Contrition for our Sins, and forſaking of them, *we ſhall periſh*; That *without Holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*; That *no Fornicator, or Adulterer, or Idolater, or Covetous Perſon, nor any one that lives in the practice of ſuch ſins, ſhall have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of God or Chriſt.* There is as great and unpaſſable a Gulf fixt between Heaven and a wicked Man; as there is betwixt Heaven and Hell. And when Men have done all they can to debauch and corrupt the Chriſtian Doctrine, it is impoſſible to reconcile a wicked

wicked Life with any reaſonable and well-grounded Hopes of Happineſs in another World. No Church hath that Priviledge, to ſave a Man upon any other Terms, than thoſe which our Bleſſed Saviour hath declared in his holy Goſpel. All Religions are equal in this; That a bad Man can be Saved in none of them. Serm. 7.

The Church of *Rome* pretends their Church and Religion to be the only ſafe and ſure way to Salvation; and yet, if their Doctrine be true, concerning the Intention of the Prieſt, (and if it be not, they are much to blame in making it an Article of their Faith) I ſay, if it be true, that the Intention of the Prieſt is neceſſary to the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments; then there is no Religion in the World, that runs the Salvation of Men upon more and greater Hazards and Uncertainties, and ſuch as by no Care and Diligence of Man in *working out his own Salvation*, are to be avoided and prevented.

As for the eaſier Terms of Salvation which they offer to Men, they ſignifie nothing, if they be not able to make them good; which no Man can reaſonably believe they can do, that hath read

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the Bible, and doth in any good measure understand the Nature of God, and the Design of Religion. For Instance; That after the long Course of a most lewd and flagitious Life, a Man may be reconciled to God, and have his Sins forgiven at the last Gasp, upon Confession of them to the Priest, with that imperfect degree of Contrition for them, which they call *Attrition*, together with the Absolution of the Priest.

Now *Attrition* is a Trouble for Sin, meerly for fear of the Punishment of it. And this, together with *Confession*, and the *Absolution* of the Priest, without any Hatred of Sin for the Evil and Contrariety of it to the holy Nature and Law of God, and without the least Spark of Love to God, will do the Sinner's business, and put him into a state of Grace and Salvation, without any other Grace or Disposition for Salvation, but only the Fear of Hell and Damnation. This, I confess, is easie: but the great Difficulty is, to believe it to be true. And certainly, no man that ever seriously considered the Nature of God and Religion, can ever be perswaded to build the Hopes of his Salvation upon such a *Quick-sand*. The Absolution of all

all the Priests in the World will not procure the Forgiveness of God for any Man, that is not disposed for his Mercy by such a Repentance as the Gospel requires; which I am sure is very different from that which is required by the *Council* of *Trent*. Serm. 7.

They that offer Heaven to men upon so very large and loose Terms, give great Cause to suspect, that they will never make good their Offer; the Terms are so unreasonably cheap and easie, that there must be some Fraud and False Dealing. And on the other hand, nothing ought to recommend our Religion more to a wise and considerate Man, than that the Terms of Salvation which we propose to Men, *viz.* Faith, and Repentance, and a sincere Obedience to the Precepts of the Gospel, manifested in the Tenure of a Holy and Virtuous Life, are not only perfectly agreeable to the plain and constant Declaration of Holy Scripture; but do likewise naturally tend to engage Men most effectually to a good Life, and thereby to make them *meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. And therefore every body ought to be afraid of a Religion, which makes

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ſuch laviſh Offers of Salvation, and to take heed how he ventures his Soul upon them. For if, after all the Hopes that are given of Salvation upon ſuch and ſuch Terms, the Sinner do really miſcarry and miſs of Heaven; it is but very ill Comfort to him, to be put into a *Fool's Paradiſe*, for a Minute or two before he leaves the World, and the next Moment after to find himſelf *in the place of Torments*. I proceed to the

5. And *Laſt* Particular I mentioned, as implied in the Exhortation here in the Text, *viz.* That we *hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, againſt all the cunning Arts and inſinuations of buſie and diſputing Men, whoſe Deſign it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to gain Proſelytes to their Party and Faction. To this purpoſe there are ſeveral Cautions given by our Bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles. *Matth.* 24. 4. *Take heed that no man deceive you; for many ſhall come in my Name, and ſhall deceive many.* Eph. 4. 14. *That ye henceforth be no more Children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the ſlight of men;* ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ (the Word ſignifies the Cunning of Gameſters at Dice;) *by the ſlight of Men, and the cunning*

cunning Craftineſs whereby they lye in wait to deceive. And *Chap.* 5. 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain Words.* Col. 2.8. *Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through Philoſophy and vain Deceit*; that is, by Sophiſtry and vain Reaſoning, under a pretence of Philoſophy. *Heb.* 13. 9. *Be not carried about with divers and ſtrange Doctrines.* 2 *Pet.* 3. 17. *Beware leſt you alſo, being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs.* And this Caution is enforc'd by an expreſs Prediction of *a great Apoſtaſie* which ſhould happen in the Chriſtian Church, by which many ſhould be ſeduced, by pretence of Miracles, and by ſeveral Arts of Deceit and Falſhood. This *Apoſtaſie* St. *Paul* expreſly foretells, 2 *Theſ.* 2. 1, 2, 3. *We beſeech you, Brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye be not ſoon ſhaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by Spirit* (that is, by pretence to Inſpiration) *nor by Word* (or Meſſage) *nor by Leter as from us, as that the Day of Chriſt is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means*; *for that Day ſhall not come, except there come a falling away, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition.* And after a particular Deſcription of him, he adds,

Serm. 7.

v. 9.

v. 9. *Whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders, and in all deceitfulneſs of Unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh.* From all which he concludes, *v.* 15. *Therefore, Brethren, ſtand faſt.*

The particular nature and kind of this *Apoſtaſie* the ſame Apoſtle deſcribes more fully, 1 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2, 3. *Now the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſly, that in the latter times ſome ſhall Apoſtatize from the Faith, giving heed to ſeducing Spirits and Doctrines of Devils, ſpeaking Lies in Hypocriſie,* (*i. e.* under a great Pretence of Sanctity, ſpreading their pernicious Errours) *forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats.* This is a very lively and pat Deſcription of that *great Apoſtaſie* in the Chriſtian Church, which began in the *Weſtern* Part of it, and hath ſpread it ſelf far and wide. For there the Spirit of Error and Falſhood has prevailed, under an Hypocritical Pretence of their being the only True Church and True Chriſtians in the World. There Marriage, and ſeveral ſorts of Meat, are forbidden to ſeveral Ranks and Orders of Men. All the Difficulty is, what is here meant by *Doctrines of Devils*; and theſe certainly can

can be no other than Doctrines tending to Idolatry, which the Scripture every where doth in a particular manner ascribe to the Devil, as the Inventer and great Promoter of it. And this is very much confirmed by what we find added in some ancient Greek Copies in this Text, which runs thus; *In the latter times some shall apostatize from the Faith; for they shall worship the Dead, as some also in Israel worshipped.* And then it follows, *giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils.* So that the particular kind of Idolatry, into which some part of the Christian Church should apostatize, is here pointed at; That they should worship Souls departed, or the Spirits of dead Men; which was part of the Heathen Idolatry, into which the People of *Israel* did frequently relapse. So that the Spirit of God doth here foretell such an *Apostasie* in some part of the Christian Church as the People of *Israel* were guilty of, in falling into the Heathen Idolatry. *They shall be Worshippers of the Dead, as the Israelites also were.* Serm. 7.

And this is *the great and dangerous Seduction* which the Christians are so much cautioned against in the New Testament, and charged *to hold fast the profession*

profeſſion of the Faith againſt the cunning Ares and Inſinuations of ſeducing Spirits; not but (as I ſaid before) that we are always to have an Ear open to Reaſon, and to be ready to hearken and to yield to That, whenever it is fairly propoſed: But to be over-reached and rooked out of one's Religion, by little Sophiſtical Arts and Tricks, is Childiſh and ſilly. After we are, upon due Trial and Examination of the Grounds of our Religion, ſettled and eſtabliſhed in it, we ought not to ſuffer our ſelves to be removed from it, by the groundleſs Pretences of Confident People to *Infallibility*, and to be practiſed upon by *Cunning Men, who lie at catch* to make Proſelytes to their Party. This is to be *like Children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine.*

And we ought to be the more careful of our ſelves; becauſe there never was any time, wherein ſeducing Spirits were more bold and buſie to pervert Men from the Truth. Againſt theſe we ſhould *hold faſt* our Religion, as a Man would do his Money in a Crowd. It paſſeth in the World for a great Mark of Folly, when *a Man and his Money are ſoon parted*: But it is a ſign of much greater Folly,

Folly, for a Man eaſily to quit his Religion; eſpecially to be caught by ſome ſuch groſs Methods, as the Seducers I am ſpeaking of commonly uſe, and which lie ſo very open to Suſpicion; ſuch as ill-deſigning Men are wont to practiſe upon a young Heir, when they have inſinuated themſelves into his Company, to make a Prey of him. They charge him to tell no body in what Company he hath been; not to ask the Counſel and Advice of his Friends concerning what they have been perſuading him to; becauſe they, for their own Intereſt, will be ſure to diſſwade him from it. Juſt thus do theſe Seducers practiſe upon weak People. They charge them not to acquaint their Miniſter, with whom they have been; nor what Diſcourſe they have had about Religion; nor what Books have been put into their Hands; becauſe then, all their kind Deſign and Intention towards them will be defeated. But above all, they muſt be ſure to read no Books on the other ſide, becauſe they are no competent Judges of Points of Faith; and this reading on both ſides will rather confound, than clear their Underſtandings. They tell them, that they have ſtated the matter truly, and would Serm. 7.

Vol. I. would not for all the World deceive them; and they may eaſily perceive, by their earneſt Application to them, that nothing but Charity, and a paſſionate deſire of the Salvation of their Souls, makes them take all theſe Pains with them. But this is ſo groſs a way of proceeding, that any Man of common underſtanding muſt needs diſcern by this kind Treatment, that theſe Men can have no honeſt Deſign upon them.

To come then to a more particular Conſideration of the Arts and Methods which they uſe (I mean particularly thoſe of the Church of *Rome*) in making Proſelytes to their Religion: As,

1. In allowing them to be very competent and ſufficient Judges for themſelves, in the Choice of their Church and Religion, (that is, which is the True Church and Religion, in which alone Salvation is to be had) and yet telling them at the ſame Time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular Doctrines, and Points of Faith and Practice; but for theſe, they muſt rely upon the Judgment of an Infallible Church, when they are in it; otherwiſe they will certainly run into damnable Errors and Miſtakes about theſe things.

And they muſt of neceſſity allow them to be ſufficient Judges for themſelves in the Choice of their Religion; as will be evident, by conſidering in what Method they proceed with their intended Proſelyte.

They propoſe to him to change his Church and his Religion, becauſe he is in the wrong; and they will ſhew him a better, and ſuch a one as is the only True one, and in which alone Salvation is to be had. To perſwade him hereto, they offer him ſome Reaſons and Arguments, or give him Books to read, containing Arguments to move him to make this Change, to ſatisfie him of the Reaſonableneſs, and to Convince him of the Neceſſity of it.

Now by this way of proceeding (and they can take no other) they do, whether they will or no, make the Perſon, whom they are endeavouring to convert, a Judge for himſelf, which Church and Religion is beſt; that which they would have him embrace and come over to, or that which they would perſwade him to forſake. For to what end elſe do they offer him Reaſons and Arguments to perſwade him to leave our Church, and to come over to theirs; but that he may conſider

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conſider the Force and Weight of them; and having conſidered them, may judge whether they be of force ſufficient to over-rule him to make this Change? So that as unwilling as they are to make particular Perſons judge for themſelves about Points of Faith, and about the Senſe of Scripture confirming thoſe Points (becauſe this is to leave every Man to his own private Spirit and Fancy and giddy Brain) yet they are compelled by Neceſſity, and againſt their own Principles, to allow a Man, in this caſe of chuſing his Religion, to be a Judge of the Reaſons and Arguments which they offer to induce him thereto. So that, whether they will or no, they muſt permit him to be a Judge for himſelf for *this once*, but not to make a Practice of it, or to pretend this Priviledge ever after: For in acknowledgment of this great Favour, of being permitted to judge for himſelf *this once*, (which they do unwillingly grant him, and upon meer Neceſſity) he is for ever after to reſign up his Judgment to the Church. And tho this Liberty be allowed *pro hâc vice*, and properly *to ſerve a turn*, *i. e.* in order to the changing of his Religion; yet he is to underſtand,

ſtand, that he is no fit and competent Judge of particular Points of Faith; theſe he muſt all learn from the True Church when he is in it, and take them upon her Authority; and in ſo doing he ſhall do very prudently, becauſe She is infallible, and cannot be deceived; but He may. Serm. 7.

But is there any Senſe in all this, that a Man ſhould be very fit and able to judge of that which they eſteem the main and fundamental Point of all, namely, which is the True Church and Religion; and of the Reaſons and Arguments whereby they pretend to demonſtrate it; and of the true Meaning of thoſe Texts of Scripture, whereby they pretend to prove theirs to be the only True Church: and yet ſhould be wholly unable to judge of particular Points of Faith; or of the True Senſe of any Texts of Scripture that can be produced for the Proof of thoſe Points?

Is it ſo very prudent, in all the particular Points of Faith, for a Man to rely upon the Judgment of the Church, becauſe She is infallible; and not to truſt his own Judgment about them, becauſe He is fallible, and may be deceived? And is

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it prudent likewiſe for this Man to truſt his own Judgment in the main Buſineſs of all; namely, Which is the true Church and Religion; concerning which he is as fallible in his Judgment, and as liable to be deceived, as in the Particular Points? And if he be miſtaken in the main Point, they muſt grant his Miſtake to be fatal; becauſe his Sincerity, as to all the reſt, depends upon it. This is a great Myſtery and Riddle, that every particular Man ſhould have ſo ſufficient a Judgment as to this main and fundamental Buſineſs, Which is the True Church and Religion: and ſhould have no Judgment at all about particular Points, fit to be truſted and relied upon! As if there were a certain Jungment and Prudence, *quoad hoc*; and as if all Men's Underſtandings were ſo framed, as to be very judicious and diſcerning in this main Point of Religion; but to be weak, and dangerous, and blind, as to all particular Points: Or, as if a Man might have a very good Judgment, and be fit to be truſted and relyed upon, before he come into their Church; but from the very moment he enters into it, his Judgment were quite loſt and good for nothing: For this

this in effect and by interpretation they ſay, when they allow a Man to be very able to judge which is the true Church and Religion; but ſo ſoon as he hath diſcovered and embraced that, to have no Judgment of his own afterwards of any Point of Religion whatſoever; and a very tempting Argument it is to any Man that hath Judgment, to enter into that Church. Serm. 7.

2. Another Art they uſe with their intended Proſelyte, in order to his making a right choice of his Religion, is to caution him, to hear and read only the Arguments and Books which are on one ſide. But now admitting their deſigned Proſelyte to be juſt ſuch a Judge, and ſo far as they will allow him to be, and no farther, *viz.* Which is the true Church; but to have no fitneſs and Ability at all to judge of particular Points of Faith: yet methinks they put a very odd Condition, and untoward Reſtraint upon this Judge, in telling him, (as they certainly uſe to do thoſe whom they would pervert) That he muſt have no Diſcourſe, nor read any Books, but only on that ſide which they would gain him to; becauſe that

Vol. I. is the way to perplex and confound him, ſo that he ſhall never be able to come to a clear Judgment and Reſolution in the Matter. But will any Man admit this way of proceeding in a Temporal Caſe? This is juſt as if in a Cauſe of the greateſt conſequence, the Counſel on one ſide ſhould go about to perſuade the Judge, that it is only fit to hear what he hath to ſay in the Caſe; that he will open it very plainly, and ſtate the Matter in difference ſo clearly and impartially, and bring ſuch ſtrong Reaſons and Proofs for what he ſays, that he ſhall not need to hear any thing on the other ſide, but may proceed to Judgment without any more ado: But if when the matter is thus laid before him ſo plainly, and is even ripe for Judgment, he will trouble himſelf needleſly to hear the other ſide; this will caſt them back where they firſt began, and bring the Matter to an endleſs wrangling, and ſo confound and puzzle his Underſtanding, that he ſhall never be able to paſs any clear Judgment in the Cauſe.

What think we would a Judge ſay to ſuch a bold and ſenſeleſs Pleader?

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Serm. 7.

The Caſe is the ſame, and the Abſurdity every whit as groſs and palpable, in preſſing any Man to make a Judgment in a Matter which infinitely more concerns him, upon hearing only the Reaſons and Arguments on one ſide.

3. Another Art which they uſe in makeing Proſelytes, is to poſſeſs them, that there is but One thing that they are mainly concern'd to enquire into, and that is this; Since there is but one true Catholick Church of Chriſt upon Earth, out of which there is no Salvation to be had; Which that true Church is? And when they have found that out, That will teach them in a moſt Infallible way the True Faith and Religion, and all things that are neceſſary to be believed or done by them, in order to their Salvation; ſo that they have nothing to do, but to ſatisfie themſelves in this ſingle Enquiry; Which is the True Catholick Church of Chriſt? This is the *Unum neceſſarium*, the one thing neceſſary; and when they have found out this, and are ſatisfied about it, they need to enquire no farther, this Church will fully inſtruct and ſatisfie them in

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all other things. And this I cannot deny to be a very Artificial way of proceeding, and to ſerve their purpoſe very well; for they have theſe two great Advantages by it.

1. That it makes the work ſhort, and ſaves them a great deal of labour, by bringing the whole Buſineſs to one ſingle Enquiry: and when they have gained this Point, that this ſingle Queſtion is all that they need to be ſatisfied in; then they have nothing to do, but to ply and puzzle the Man with their Motives of Credibility, and Marks of the true Church; and to ſhew, as well as they can, how theſe Marks agree to Their Church, and are all to be found in it, and in no other; and to ſet out to the beſt advantage the Glorious Priviledges of Their Church, the Miraculous things that have been and are ſtill daily done in it, and the innumerable multitude of their Saints and Martyrs; and if theſe General Things take and ſink into them, their work is in effect done.

2. Another great Advantage they have by it, is, That by bringing them to this Method, they divert and keep them off from the many Objections againſt their

their Church and Religion, namely, the Errors and Curruptions which we charge them withal. For this is the thing they are afraid of, and will by no means be brought to; to vindicate and make good their Innovations in Faith and Practice, ſo plainly in many things contrary to Scripture, and to the Faith and Practice of the Primitive Church; as the Doctrines of *Tranſubſtantiation*, of *Purgatory*, *the Popes Supremacy*, of *the Infallibility of their Church*, of their *Seven Sacraments* Inſtituted by Chriſt, and of *the Intention of the Prieſt* being neceſſary to the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments: and then ſeveral of their Practices; as of *the Worſhip of Images*, of *the Invocation of Angels and Saints*, of the Service *of God* and *the Scriptures in an Unknown Tongue*, and *the Communion in one Kind*; and ſeveral other things, ſo plainly contrary to the Scriptures, and the Practice and Uſage of the Primitive Church, that almoſt the meaneſt Capacity may eaſily be made ſenſible and convinced of it. Theſe are ſore places, which they deſire not to have touched, and therefore they uſe all poſſible Artifice, to keek Serm. 7.

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Men at a diſtance from them; partly becauſe the particular diſcuſſion of them is tedious, and it requires more than ordinary Skill, to ſay any thing that is tenable for them, and ſo to paint and varniſh them over, as to hide the Corruptions and Deformities of them; but chiefly, becauſe they are conſcious to themſelves, that as in all theſe Points they are upon the Defenſive, ſo they are alſo upon very great Diſadvantages; and therefore to avoid, if it be poſſible, being troubled with them, they have deviſed this ſhorter, and eaſier, and more convenient way of making Proſelytes.

Not that they are always able to keep themſelves thus within their Trenches; but are ſometimes, whether they will or no, drawn out to Encounter ſome of theſe Objections: but they rid themſelves of them as ſoon, and as dexterouſly as they can, by telling thoſe that make them, that they will hereafter give them full Satisfaction to all theſe Matters, when they are gotten over the firſt and main Enquiry; Which is the true Church? For if they can keep them to this Point, and gain them

them to it, they can deal with them more eaſily in the reſt: For when they can once ſwallow this Principle, That the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church, and conſequently, as they have told them all along, Infallible; this Infallibility of the Church once entertained, will cover a multitude of particular Errors and Miſtakes; and it will very much help to cure the weakneſs and defects of ſome particular Doctrines and Practices, and at leaſt to ſilence and over-rule all Objections againſt them. So that the benefit and advantage of this Method is viſibly and at firſt ſight very great; and therefore no wonder they are ſo ſteady and conſtant to it, and do ſo obſtinately inſiſt upon it. But how convenient ſoever it be to them; it is, I am ſure, very unreaſonable in it ſelf; and that upon theſe Accounts. Serm. 7.

1. Becauſe the True Church doth not conſtitute and make the True Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine; but it is the True Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine, the Profeſſion whereof makes the True Church; and therefore in Reaſon and Order of Nature, the firſt Enquiry muſt be,

be; What is the True Faith and Doctrine of Chriſt, which by him was delivered to the Apoſtles, and by them publiſh'd and made known to the World, and by their Writings Tranſmitted and Conveyed down to us? And this being found, every Society of Chriſtians which holds this Doctrine, is a True Part of the Catholick Church; and all the Chriſtians throughout the World that agree in this Doctrine, are the One True Catholick Church.

2. The Enquiry about the True Church can have no Iſſue, even according to their own way of proceeding, without a due Examination of the particular Doctrines and Practices of that Church, the Communion whereof they would perſwade a Man to embrace. We will admit at preſent this to be the firſt Enquiry; Which is the True Church? Let us now ſee in what way they manage this, to gain Men over to their Church. They tell them, that the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church of Chriſt. The truth of this Aſſertion we will particularly examine afterwards, when we come to conſider the next ſtep of

of their Method, in dealing with their Converts. At preſent I ſhall only take notice in the General, what way they take to prove this Aſſertion; namely, That the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church; and that is, by the Notes and Marks of the True Church, which they call their *Motives of Credibility*; becauſe by theſe they deſign to perſwade them, that the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church. I ſhall not now reckon up all the Notes and Marks which they give of the True Church; but only obſerve, that one of their Principal Marks of the True Church is this; That the Faith and Doctrine of it be agreeable to the Doctrine of the Primitive and Apoſtolick Church, (*i. e.*) to the Doctrine delivered by our Saviour and his Apoſtles: And this *Bellarmine* makes one of the Marks of the True Church. And they muſt unavoidably make it ſo; becauſe the True Faith and Doctrine of Chriſt, is that which indeed Conſtitutes the True Church. But if this be an Eſſential Mark of the True Church; then no Man can poſſibly know the Church of *Rome* to be the True Church, till he have exa-

Serm. 7.

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mind the particular Doctrines and Practices of it, and the Agreement of them with the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of Chriſtianity; and this neceſſarily draws on and engages them in a diſpute of the particular Points and Differences betwixt us; which is the very thing they would avoid by this Method, and which I have now plainly ſhewed they cannot do; becauſe they cannot poſſibly prove their Church to be the True Church, without ſhewing the Conformity of their Doctrines and Practices, to the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive and Apoſtolick Church; and this will give them work enough, and will, whether they will or no, draw them out of their Hold and Faſtneſs; which is to amuſe People with a general Enquiry, Which is the true Church? without deſcending to the Examination of their particular Doctrines and Practices. But this they muſt of neceſſity come to, before they can prove by the Notes and Marks of the True Church, that theirs is the True Church.

And this is a Demonſtration, that their Method of Satisfaction, as it is Unnatural

natural and Unreaſonable, ſo it cannot ſerve the purpoſe they aim at by it; which is, to divert Men from the Examination of the particular Points in Difference between the Church of *Rome* and Us, and to gain them over to them by a wile and trick; becauſe the very Method they take to prove themſelves to be the True Catholick Church, will enforce them to juſtifie all their particular Doctrines and Practices, before they can finiſh this Proof. Serm. 8.

And here we fix our foot; That the ſingle Queſtion and Point, upon which they would put the whole Iſſue of the Matter, cannot poſſibly be brought to any reaſonable Iſſue, without a particular Diſcuſſion and Examination of the Points in Difference betwixt Their Church and Ours: and when they can make out theſe to be agreeable to the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of the Chriſtian Church; we have reaſon to be ſatisfied, that the Church of *Rome* is a Church, in the Communion whereof a Man may be ſafe: But till that be made out; they have done nothing to perſwade any Man that underſtands himſelf, that it is ſafe, much leſs neceſſa-

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ry to be of their Communion. But if particular Points muſt be diſcuſſed and cleared, before a man can be ſatisfied in the Enquiry after the True Church; then they muſt allow their intended Convert to be a judge likewiſe of particular Points; and if he be ſufficient for that too, before he comes into their Church, I do not ſee of what uſe the Infallibility of the Church will be to him, when he is in it.

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SERMON VIII.

Of Constancy in the Profession of the true Religion.

The Fifth Sermon on this Text.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering: For he is faithful that promised.

I Have already made a considerable Prrogess in my Discourse upon these Words, in which I told you, there is an Exhortation to *hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering*: and an Argument or Encouragement thereto, because *he is faithful that promised.* I am yet upon the *First* of these, the Exhortation

hortation to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*; by which I told you the Apoſtle doth not intend, that thoſe who are capable of examining the Grounds and Reaſons of their Religion, ſhould not have the Liberty to do it; nor that, when upon due Enquiry they are, as they verily believe, eſtabliſhed in the true Faith and Religion, they ſhould obſtinately refuſe to hear any Reaſon that is fairly offered againſt their preſent Perſuaſion.

And then I proceeded to ſhew *poſitively*,

Firſt, *What* it is that we are here exhorted to *hold faſt*, (*viz.*) *The Confeſſion* or *Profeſſion of our Faith*; the ancient Chriſtian Faith, of which every Chriſtian makes Profeſſion in his Baptiſm. For it is of *that* the Apoſtle here ſpeaks, as appears plainly by the Context.

Secondly, *How* we are to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*. And of this I gave account in theſe following Particulars.

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1. We ſhould *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith*, againſt the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reaſon to ſupport that Confidence.

2. And much more againſt the Confidence of Men, contrary to plain Scripture and Reaſon, and the common Senſe of Mankind; of which I gave you particular Inſtances.

3. Againſt all the Temptations and Terrors of the World.

4. Againſt all vain Promiſes of being put into a ſafer Condition, and groundleſs Hopes of getting to Heaven upon eaſier Terms, in ſome other Church and Religion. I am now upon the

5. And *Laſt* Particular I mentioned, namely, That we are to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, againſt all the cunning Arts and inſinuations of buſie and diſputing Men, whoſe Deſign it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to make Proſelytes to their Party and Faction. I have alrea-

Vol. I. dy mentioned ſome of the Arts which they uſe, (I mean particularly them of the Church of *Rome*) in making Proſelytes to their Religion; and I have ſhewn the Abſurdity and Unreaſonableneſs of them. As,

Firſt, In allowing Men to be very competent and ſufficient Judges for themſelves, in the Choice of their Religion; (*i. e.* which is the True Church and Religion in which alone Salvation is to be had;) and yet telling them at the ſame time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular Doctrines and Points of Faith. As for theſe, they muſt rely upon the judgment of an Infallible Church; and if they do not, they will certainly run into damnable Errors and Miſtakes.

And they muſt of neceſſity allow them the firſt, a ſufficient Ability to judge for themſelves in the Choice of their Religion: Otherwiſe in vain do they offer them Arguments to perſwade them to Theirs; if they cannot judge of the Force of them. But now, after this, to deny them all Ability to judge of particular

ticular Doctrines and Points of Faith, is a very abſurd and inconſiſtent Pretence.

Secondly, Another Art they uſe, in order to their making a right Choice of their Religion, is earneſtly to perſwade them to hear and read only the Arguments and Books on Their ſide: Which is juſt as if one ſhould go about to perſwade a Judge, in order to the better underſtanding and clearer Deciſion of a Cauſe, to hear only the Council on one ſide.

Thirdly, They tell them, that the only thing they are to enquire into, is, which is the True Church, the one Catholick Church mentioned in the Creed, out of which there is no Salvation; and when they have found that, they are to rely upon the Authority of that Church, which is Infallible, for all other things. And this Method they wiſely take, to avoid particular Diſputes about the Innovations and Errors which we charge them withal. But I have ſhewn at large, that this cannot be the Firſt Enquiry: Becauſe it is not the true Church, that

Vol. 1. makes the true Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine: but the Profeſſion of the true Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine, which makes the true Church.

Beſides, their way of proving Their Church to be the only true Church, being by the Marks and Properties of the true Church, of which the Chief is, the Conformity of their Doctrines and Practices with the Primitive and Apoſtolical Church; this unavoidably draws on an Examination of their particular Doctrines and Practices, whether they be conformable to thoſe of the Primitive and Apoſtolical Church, before their great Enquiry, *Which is the true Church?* can be brought to any Iſſue; which it is plain it can never be, without entring into the Ocean of particular Diſputes, which they deſire above all things to avoid. So that they are never the nearer by this Method; they can neither ſhorten their Work by it, nor keep off the Examination of their particular Errors and Corruptions; which are a very ſore place, and they cannot endure we ſhould touch it.

I ſhall now proceed to diſcover ſome other Arts and Methods which they uſe in ſeducing People to Their Church and Religion, and ſhall be as brief in them as I can. Serm. 8.

Fourthly, They pretend, that the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church, (*i.e.*) the Viſible Society of all Chriſtians, united to the Biſhop of *Rome*, as the Supream Paſtor and Viſible Head of Chriſt's Church upon Earth: from whence it clearly follows, That it is neceſſary to all Chriſtians to joyn themſelves to the Communion of the *Roman* Church; otherwiſe they cannot be Members of the Catholick Church of Chriſt, out of which there is no Salvation.

We grant the Conſequence, That if the *Roman* Church be the Catholick Church, it is neceſſary to be of that Communion; becauſe out of the Catholick Church there is ordinarily no Salvation to be had. But how do they prove, that the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church? They would fain have us ſo civil, as to take this for granted: becauſe if we do

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not; they do not well know how to go about to prove it. And indeed, ſome things are obſtinate, and will not be proved without ſo much Trouble and Difficulty, that it is better to let them alone; and by the confident Aſſertion of them, by Importunity, and by any other fair means, to get them believed, without Proof of this ſtubborn ſort of Propoſitions, which will admit of no Proof. This is one, That a Part is the Whole; or, which is all one, That the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church. For that is but a part of the Chriſtian Church, and not the beſt Part neither, but perhaps the very worſt and moſt corrupt of all the reſt, is no difficult matter to prove, and hath been often done. But now to prove the Church of *Rome* to be the Catholick Church, that is, the whole Society of all True Chriſtians in the World, theſe following Particulars ought to be clearly ſhewn and made out.

1. A plain Conſtitution of our Saviour, whereby St. *Peter*, and his Succeſſors at *Rome* are made the Supream Head and Paſtors of the whole Chriſtian Church,

Church. For St. *Peter* Firſt. Can they ſhew any ſuch Conſtitution in the Goſpel, or can they produce the leaſt Proof and Evidence out of the Hiſtory of the Acts and the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles, that St. *Peter* was acknowledg'd for ſuch by the reſt of the Apoſtles? Nay, is there not clear evidence there to the contrary, that in the firſt Council of the Chriſtian Church at *Jeruſalem*, St. *James*, the Biſhop of *Jeruſalem* was, if not Superior, at leaſt equal to him? Does St. *Paul* acknowledge any Superiority of St. *Peter* over him? Nay, does he not upon ſeveral occaſions declare himſelf equal to the chiefeſt Apoſtles, even to St. *Peter* himſelf? And is this conſiſtent with a plain Conſtitution of our Lord's making St. *Peter* Supream Head and Paſtor of the Chriſtian Church? Serm. 8.

But ſuppoſe this to have been ſo; where doth it appear, by any Conſtitution of our Saviour, that this Authority was derived to his Succeſſors? And if it were, why to his Succeſſors at *Rome*, rather than at *Antioch*, where he was firſt, and unqueſtionably Biſhop? They muſt acknowledge, that when he

Vol. I. was Biſhop of *Antioch*, he was the Supream Head and Paſtor of the whole Chriſtian Church; and then the Style muſt have been, the *Antiochian* Catholick Church, as it is now the *Roman* Catholick. But do they find any footſteps of ſuch a Style in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory?

2. To made good this Propoſition, That the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church, they are in conſequence obliged to affirm and believe, That the Churches of *Aſia*, which were Excommunicated by the Biſhops of *Rome*, for not keeping *Eaſter* as they did; and the Churches of *Aſia* and *Africa*, which were Excommunicated by the ſame Biſhop, upon the Point of Rebaptizing Hereticks; that all theſe, by being turn'd out of the Communion of the *Roman* Church, were alſo cut off from the Catholick Church, and from a poſſibility of Salvation. This the Church of *Rome* themſelves will not affirm; and yet, if to be caſt out of the Communion of the *Roman*, and the Catholick Church, be all one, they muſt affirm it.

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Serm. 8.

3. In conſequence of this Propoſition, That the Church of *Rome* is the Catholick Church, they ought to hold, that all Baptiſm out of the Communion of Their Church is void and of none effect. For if it be good; then it makes the Perſons baptized, Members of the Catholick Church; and then thoſe that are out of the Communion of the *Roman* Church, may be true Members of the Catholick Church; and then the *Roman*, and the Catholick Church are not all one. But the Church of *Rome* holds the Baptiſm of Hereticks, and of thoſe that are out of the Communion of Their Church, to be good; which is a Demonſtration, that the *Roman* Church neither is the Catholick Church; nor if ſhe believe conſiſtently, can ſhe think her ſelf to be ſo.

4. In conſequence of this Propoſition, all the Chriſtians in the World, which do not yield Subjection to the Biſhop of *Rome*, and acknowledge his Supremacy, are no true parts of the Catholick Church, nor in a poſſibility of Salvation. And this does not only exclude thoſe of the Reform'd Religion from being

Vol. 1. being Members of the Catholick Church; but the *Greeks*, and the *Eaſtern* Churches; (*i. e.*) *Four* of the *Five* Patriarchal Churches of the Chriſtian World; which taken together, are really greater than thoſe in Communion with the Church of *Rome*. And this the Church of *Rome* does affirm, concerning all thoſe Churches and Chriſtians, which refuſe Subjection to the Biſhop of *Rome*, that they are out of the Communion of the Catholick Church, and a capacity of Salvation. But ſurely it is not poſſible, that the True Catholick Church of Chriſt can have ſo little Charity as this comes to; and to a wiſe Man there needs no other Demonſtration than this, That The Church of *Rome* is ſo far from being the whole Chriſtian Church, that it's a very Arrogant and Uncharitable Part of it.

5. *and Laſtly*; In conſequence of the Truth of this Propoſition, and of the Importance of it to the Salvation of Souls, and to the Peace and Unity of the Chriſtian Church, they ought to produce expreſs Mention of the *Roman* Catholick Church, in the Ancient Creeds of the Chriſtian Church. For if this Propoſition

on, That the *Roman* Church is the Catholick, be true; it was always ſo, and always of the greateſt Importance to the Salvation of Men, and the Peace and Unity of the Chriſtian Church: and if it were ſo, and always believed to be ſo, by the Chriſtian Church, as they pretend; What reaſon can be imagin'd, why the Ancient Chriſtian Church ſhould never ſay ſo, nor put an Article of ſuch Conſequence and Importance in expreſs Words in their Creeds; nor why they ſhould not have uſed the Style of *Roman* Catholick, as familiarly then, as they do now in the *Roman* Church? A plain Evidence that this is a new Style which they uſe, when they give themſelves the Title of the *Roman* Catholick Church; and that the Ancient Chriſtian Church knew better, than to call one Part of the Catholick Church, the Whole. I am ſure, that *Æneas Sylvius* (who was afterwards Pope *Pius* the Second) ſays, that before the Council of *Nice*, little reſpect was had to the *Roman* Church. But how does this conſiſt with their preſent Pretence, that the *Roman* Church is, and always hath been the Catholick Church; and that the Biſhop Serm. 8.

ſhop of *Rome* is by Chriſt's appointment, the Supream Paſtor, and Viſible Head of the whole Chriſtian Church? Is it poſſible that this ſhould be believed in the Chriſtian Church before the Council of *Nice*; and yet little reſpect to be had at that time to the *Roman* Church? This indeed was ſaid by *Æneas Sylvius*, before he ſate in the Infallible Chair; but is never the leſs true for that.

Fifthly, The next ſtep of their Method is, That the *Roman* Church is Infallible; and by this means They have a certain remedy againſt Hereſie, and a Judge of Controverſies, from which there is no Appeal, which We want in Our Church. And this is a Glorious Priviledge indeed, if they could prove that they had it, and that it would be ſo certain a Remedy againſt Hereſie, and give a final Deciſion to all Controverſies. But there is not one tittle of all this, of which they are able to give any tenable Proof: For,

1. All the pretence for their Infallibility relies upon the truth of the former Propoſition, That the Church of *Rome*

Rome is the Catholick Church, and *That* they ſay is Infallible: And I have already ſhewn, that That Propoſition is not only deſtitute of any good Proof; but is as evidently falſe, as that a Part of a thing is the Whole. Serm. 8.

2. But ſuppoſing it were true, That the *Roman* Church were the Catholick Church; yet it is neither evident in it ſelf, nor can be proved by them, that the Catholick Church of every Age is Infallible, in deciding all Controverſies of Religion. It is granted by all Chriſtians, that our Saviour and his Apoſtles were infallible, in the Delivery of the Chriſtian Doctrine; and they proved their Infallibility by Miracles; and this was neceſſary at firſt for the Security of our Faith: but this Doctrine being once delivered and tranſmitted down to us in the Holy Scriptures, Written by the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, who were infallibly aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt; we have now a certain and Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice, which, with the aſſiſtance and inſtruction of thoſe Guides and Paſtors which Chriſt hath appointed in his Church,

Vol. I. Church, is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary. And as there is no evidence of the Continuance of Infallibility in the Guides and Paſtors of the Church, in the Ages which followed the Apoſtles; becauſe Miracles are long ſince ceaſed: ſo there is no need of the Continuance of it, for the Preſervation of the True Faith and Religion; becauſe God hath ſufficiently provided for that, by that Infallible Rule of Faith and Manners which he hath left to his Church in the Holy Scriptures, *which are* every way ſufficient and *able to make* both Paſtors and People *wiſe unto Salvation.*

3. As for a certain Remedy againſt Hereſie, it is certain God never intended there ſhould be any; no more than he hath provided a certain Remedy againſt Sin and Vice; which ſurely is every whit as contrary to the Chriſtian Religion, and therefore as fit to be provided againſt, as Hereſie: But it is certain in Experience, that God hath provided no certain and effectual Remedy againſt Sin and Vice; for which I can give no other Reaſon, but that God does that which

which he thinks beſt and fitteſt, and not what we are apt to think to be ſo. Serm. 8.

Beſides that Infallibility is not a certain Remedy againſt Hereſie. The Apoſtles were certainly Infallible; and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguiſh Hereſie; which never more abounded than in the Apoſtles Times. And Saint *Paul* expreſly tells us, 1 *Cor.* 1. 19. *That there muſt be Hereſies; that they which are approved may be made manifeſt.* And St. *Peter*, the 2 *Epiſt.* 2. 1. *That there ſhould be falſe Teachers among Chriſtians, who ſhould privily bring in damnable Hereſies; and that many ſhould follow their pernicious ways.* But now if *there muſt be Hereſies*; either the Church muſt not be Infallible, or Infallibility in the Church is no certain Remedy againſt them.

I proceed to the next ſtep they make, *viz.*

Sixthly, That Chriſt hath always a Viſible Church upon Earth; and that They can ſhew a Church, which from the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, hath always

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always made a Viſible Profeſſion of the ſame Doctrines and Practices which are now believed and Practiſed in the Church of *Rome*: but that We can ſhew no Viſible Church, that from the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, hath always oppoſed the Church of *Rome*, in thoſe Doctrines and Practices which we now revile and find fault with in their Church.

That Chriſt hath always had, and ever ſhall have to the end of the World, a Viſible Church, Profeſſing and Practiſing his True Faith and Religion, is agreed on both ſides: But We ſay, that he hath no where promiſed, that This ſhall be free from all Errors and Corruptions in Faith and Practice. This the Churches planted by the Apoſtles themſelves were not, even in Their times, and during Their abode amongſt them; and yet they were true parts of the Chriſtian Catholick Church. In the following Ages, Errors and Corruptions and Superſtitions did by degrees creep in and grow up, in ſeveral parts of the Church; as St. *Auſtin*, and others

other of the Fathers complain of their Times. Since that, ſeveral Famous Parts of the Chriſtian Church, both in *Aſia* and *Africa*, have not only been greatly corrupted, but have Apoſtaſtiz'd from the Faith; ſo that in many places there are hardly any Footſteps of Chriſtianity among them. But yet ſtill Chriſt hath had in all theſe Ages a Viſible Church upon Earth; tho' perhaps no Part of it at all times free from ſome Errors and Corruptions; and in ſeveral Parts of it, great Corruptions both in Faith and Practice; and in none I think more and longer, than in the Church of *Rome*, for all ſhe boaſts her ſelf like Old *Babylon*, *Iſa.*47. 7, 8. *That ſhe is a Lady for ever; and ſays in her heart, I am, and none elſe beſides me*; And like the Church of *Laodicea*, Revel. 3. 17. which ſaid, *I am rich, and increaſed with Goods, and have need of nothing*; When the Spirit of God ſaith, that *ſhe was wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and knew it not.* Serm. 8.

Thus the Church of *Rome* boaſts; that ſhe hath in all Ages been the True Viſile Church of Chriſt (and none be-

Vol. I. ſides her) free from all Errors in Doctrine, and Corruptions in Practice; and that from the Age of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, ſhe hath always profeſſed the ſame Doctrines and Practices which ſhe does at this day. Can any thing be more ſhameleſs than this? Did they always believe *Tranſubſtantiation*? Let their Pope *Gelaſius* ſpeak for them; who expreſly denies, that in the Sacrament there is any Subſtantial change of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Chriſt. Was this always an Article of their Faith, and neceſſary to be believed by all Chriſtians? Let *Scotus*, and ſeveral other of their Schoolmen and Learned Writers ſpeak for them. Was *Purgatory* always believed in the *Roman* Church, as it is now defined in the Council of *Trent*? Let ſeveral of their Learned Men ſpeak. In what Father; in what Council before that of *Trent*, do they find Chriſt to have Inſtituted juſt *Seven Sacraments*, neither more nor leſs? And for Practices in their Religion, they themſelves will not ſay, that in the Ancient Chriſtian Church the Scriptures were with-held from the People, and lockt up in an Unknown

known Tongue; and that the Publick Service of God, the Prayers and Leſſons were Read, and the Sacraments Celebrated, in an Unknown Tongue; and that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was given to the People only in one Kind. Where do they find in Holy Scripture, or in the Doctrine and Practice of the Ancient Chriſtian Church, any Command or Example for the Worſhip of Images; for the Invocation of Saints and Angels and the Bleſſed Virgin; which do now make a great part of their Religion? Nay, is not the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and of the Ancient Fathers plainly againſt all theſe Practices? With what face then can it be ſaid, That the Church of *Rome* hath made a conſtant Viſible Profeſſion of the ſame Faith and Practice in all Ages, from the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles? Or would the primitive Church of *Rome*, if it ſhould now viſit the Earth again, own the preſent Church of *Rome* to be the ſame in all Matters of Faith and practice, that it was when they left it?

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And whereas they demand of Us, to ſhew a Viſible Church from the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that hath always oppoſed the Church of *Rome*, in thoſe points of Doctrine and Practice which we object to them; what can be more impertinent than this Demand? When they know that in all theſe Points we charge them with Innovations in Matters of Faith and Practice, and ſay that thoſe things came in by degrees, ſeveral Ages after the Apoſtles time, ſome ſooner, ſome later; as we are able to make good, and have done it. And would they have us ſhew them a Viſible Church, that oppoſed theſe Errors and Corruptions in their Church, before ever they appeared? This we do not pretend to ſhew. And ſuppoſing they had not been at all oppoſed, when they appeared, nor a long time after, not till the Reformation; yet if they be Errors and Corruptions of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and to the Faith and Practice of the Primitive Church; there is no Preſcription againſt Truth. 'Tis never too

too late, for any Church to reject thoſe Errors and Corruptions, and to reform it ſelf from them. Serm. 8.

The bottom of all this Matter is, they would have us to ſhew them a Society of Chriſtians, that in all Ages hath preſerved it ſelf free from all ſuch Errors and Corruptions as we charge them withal; or elſe we deny the Perpetual Viſibility of the Catholick Church. No ſuch matter. We ſay the Church of Chriſt hath always been Viſible in every Age ſince Chriſt's time; and that the ſeveral Societies of Chriſtians, profeſſing the Chriſtian Doctrine and Laws of Chriſt, have made up the Catholick Church; ſome parts whereof have in ſeveral Ages fallen into great Errors and Corruptions; and no part of the Catholick, into more and greater, than the Church of *Rome*; ſo that it requires the utmoſt of our Charity to think that they are a true, tho a very unſound and corrupt part of the Catholick Church of Chriſt.

We acknowledge likewiſe, that We

Vol. I. were once involved in the like Degeneracy; but by the mercy of God, and pious care and prudence of thoſe that were in Authority, are happily reſcued out of it: and tho' we were not out of the Catholick Church before; yet ſince our Reformation from the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, we are in it upon better Terms, and are a much ſounder Part of it; and I hope, by the Mercy and Goodneſs of God, we ſhall for ever continue ſo.

So that to the Perpetual Viſibility of Chriſt's Church, it is not neceſſary, that the whole Chriſtian Church, or indeed that any part of it ſhould be free from all Errors and Corruptions. Even the Churches planted by the Apoſtles in the Primitive Times were not ſo. St. *Paul* reproves ſeveral Doctrines and Practices in the Church of *Corinth*, and of *Coloſſe*, and of *Galatia*; and the Spirit of God, ſeveral Things in the Seven Churches of *Aſia*: and yet all theſe were true Parts and Members of the Catholick Church of Chriſt, notwithſtanding theſe Faults and Errors; becauſe

Serm. 8.

cauſe they all agreed in the Main and Eſſential Doctrines of Chriſtianity. And when more and greater Corruptions grew upon the Church, or any part of it; the greater reaſon and need there was of a Reformation. And as every particular Perſon hath a right to reform any thing that he finds amiſs in himſelf, ſo far as concerns himſelf; ſo much more every National Church hath a Power within it ſelf, to reform it ſelf from all Errors and Corruptions, and by the Sanction of the Catholick Authority to confirm that Reformation; which is our Caſe here in *England*. And whatever part of the Church, how great and eminent ſoever, excludes from her Communion ſuch a National Church, for reforming her ſelf from plain Errors and Corruptions, clearly condemned by the Word of God, and by the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Chriſtian Church, is undoubtedly Guilty of *Schiſm*. And this is the Truth of the Caſe between us and the Church of *Rome*. And no blind talk about a Perpetual Viſible Church can render Us

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guilty of *Schiſm*, for making a Real Reformation; or acquit Them of it, for caſting us out of their Communion for that Cauſe.

Seventhly, and *Laſtly*, (to mention no more) they pretend, that we delude the People, by laying too much ſtreſs upon Scripture, and making it the only Rule of Faith and Manners: whereas Scripture and Tradition together make up the entire Rule of Faith; and not Scripture Interpreted by every Man's private Fancy, but by Tradition carefully preſerved in the Church. So that it ought to be no wonder, if ſeveral of their Doctrines and Practices cannot be ſo clearly made out by Scripture, or perhaps ſeem contrary to it, as it may be expounded by a private Spirit; but not as Interpreted by the Tradition of the Church, which can only give the true Senſe of Scripture. And therefore they are to underſtand, that ſeveral of thoſe Doctrines and Practices, which we Object againſt, are moſt clearly proved by the Tradition

dition of their Church, which is of equal Authority with Scripture. Serm. 8.

In this Objection of theirs, which they deſign for the Cover of all their Errors and Corruptions, there are ſeveral things diſtinctly to be conſidered, which I ſhall do as briefly as I can.

First, Whereas it is ſuggeſted, That we delude the People, by laying too much ſtreſs upon the Scriptures, (which certainly we cannot well do, if it be the Word of God) it ought to be conſidered, whether They do not delude and abuſe them infinitely more, in keeping the Scriptures from them, and not ſuffering them to ſee That, which they cannot deny to be at leaſt a conſiderable part of the Rule of Chriſtian Doctrine and practice. Doth it not by this dealing of theirs appear very ſuſpicious, that they are extreamly afraid that the people ſhould examine their Doctrine and Practice by this Rule? For what other Reaſon can they have to conceal it from them?

Secondly,

Secondly, Whereas they affirm, that Scripture alone is not the Rule of Chriſtian Faith and Practice; but that Scripture, and Oral Tradition preſerved in the Church, and delivered down from hand to hand, make up the entire Rule; I would fain know whence they learn'd this new Doctrine of the Rule of Faith. I know that the Council of *Trent* declares it for the Rule they intend to proceed upon and make uſe of, for the Confirmation and Proof of their following Determinations and Decrees. But did any of the ancient Councils of the Chriſtian Church lay down this Rule, and proceed upon it? Did not *Conſtantine* the Emperour, at the opening of the *Firſt General Council*, lay the *Bible* before them, as the only Rule, according to which they were to proceed; and this with the Approbation of all thoſe Holy Fathers that were aſſembled in that Council? And did not following Councils proceed upon the ſame Rule? Do any of the ancient Fathers ever mention any Rule of Chriſtian Faith and Practice, beſides

ſides the Holy Scriptures, and the ancient Creed; which, becauſe it is an Abridgment of the neceſſary Articles of Chriſtian Faith contained in the Holy Scriptures, is by them frequently called *the Rule of Faith*? Do not the ſame Fathers frequently and expreſly ſay, That the Scriptures are a perfect Rule, and that all things are plainly contained in them, which concern Faith and Life; and that whatever cannot be proved by Teſtimony of Scripture, is to be rejected? All this I am ſure I can make good, by innumerable expreſs Teſtimonies of the ancient Fathers, which are well known to thoſe that are verſed in them. By what Authority then hath the Council of *Trent* ſet up this new Rule, unknown to the Chriſtian Church for 1500 Years? and who gave them this Authority? The plain truth is, the neceſſity of it for the Defence of the Errors and Corruptions which they had embraced, and were reſolved not to part with, forced them to lengthen out the Rule; the old Rule of the Holy Scriptures being too ſhort for their purpoſe. Serm. 8.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Whereas they pretend, that Holy Scripture, as expounded by a private Spirit, may not ſeem ſo favourable to ſome of their Doctrines and Practices; yet, as interpreted by Tradition, which can only give the true Senſe of Scripture, it agrees very well with them: I ſuppoſe they mean, that whereas a private Spirit would be apt to underſtand ſome Texts of Scripture, as if People were to ſearch and read the Scripture; Tradition interprets thoſe Texts in a quite other Senſe, that People are not to be permitted to read the Holy Scriptures. A private Spirit would be apt to underſtand St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe, in the 14th of the 1ſt to the *Corinthians*, to be againſt Celebrating Prayer and the Service of God in an unknown Tongue, as being contrary to Edification, and indeed to common Senſe: For he ſays, *If one ſhould come, and find them ſpeaking and praying in an unknown Tongue, will they not ſay, Ye are mad?* But now Tradition, which only knows how to give the true Senſe, can reconcile this Diſcourſe of St. *Paul* very eaſily

ſily with the Practice of the Church of *Rome* in this matter. And ſo likewiſe the Epiſtle of St. *Paul* to the *Coloſſians*, with the Worſhip of Angels; and the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, with offering the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Chriſt in the Maſs a Thouſand times every Day. And to give but one Inſtance more; Whereas a Man by his private Spirit would be very apt to underſtand the Second Commandment to forbid all Worſhip of Images; Tradition diſcovers the meaning of this Commandment to be, that *due Veneration is to be given to them.* So that at this rate of interpreting Scripture by Tradition, it is impoſſible to fix any Objection from Scripture, upon any Doctrine or Practice which they have a mind to maintain. Serm. 8.

Fourthly, Whereas they pretend the Tradition of their Church, delivered from the Mouth of Chriſt, or dictated by the Holy Spirit, and brought down to them, and preſerved by continual Succeſſion in the Church, to be of equal Authority with the Word of God; for ſo the Council

Vol. I. Council of *Trent* ſays, *That the Holy Synod doth receive and venerate theſe Traditions, with equal pious Affection and Reverence, as they do the written Word of God:* This we muſt declare againſt as unreaſonable in it ſelf, to make Tradition, conveyed by Word of Mouth from one to another, through ſo many Ages, and liable to ſo many Miſtakes and Miſcarriages, to be, at the diſtance of 1500 Years, of equal Certainty and Authority with the Holy Scriptures, carefully preſerved and tranſmitted down to us; becauſe this (as I ſaid before) is to make common Rumor and Report of equal Authority and Certainty with a written Record. And not only ſo; but hereby they make the Scriptures an imperfect Rule; contrary to the declared Judgment of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Chriſtian Church; and ſo, in truth, they ſet up *a new Rule of Faith*, whereby they change the Chriſtian Religion. For *a new Rule of Faith and Religion* makes *a new Faith and Religion*. This we charge the Church of *Rome* with, and do challenge them to ſhew this *new Rule of Faith*, before

before the Council of *Trent*; and conſequently where their Religion was before that Council; to ſhew a Religion, conſiſting of all thoſe *Articles*, which are defined by the Council of *Trent* as neceſſary to Salvation, and eſtabliſhed upon this *new Rule*, profeſſed by any Chriſtian Church in the World before that time. And as they have pitch'd upon *a new Rule of Faith*; ſo it is eaſie to ſee to what End. For take Pope *Pius* IV. his *Creed*, and we may ſee where the *Old* and *New* Religion parts; even at the end of the Twelve *Articles* of *the Apoſtles Creed*, which was the ancient Chriſtian Faith; to which are added in Pope *Pius* his *Creed* Twelve *Articles* more, defined in the Council of *Trent*, and ſupported only by Tradition. So that as the Scripture anſwers for the *Twelve old Articles*, which are plainly contained there; ſo Tradition is to anſwer for the *Twelve new ones*. And therefore the matter was calculated very exactly, when they make Tradition juſt of *equal* Authority with the Scriptures; becauſe as many *Articles* of Their Faith were

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were to be made good by it, and rely upon it, as thoſe which are proved by the Authority of Scripture. But that Tradition is of equal Authority with the Scriptures, we have nothing in the whole World for it, but the bare Aſſertion of the Council of *Trent*.

I ſhould now have added ſome other Conſiderations, tending to confirm and eſtabliſh us in our Religion, againſt the Pretences and Inſinuations of Seducing Spirits: But I ſhall proceed no farther at preſent.

SER-

SERMON IX.

Of Conſtancy in the Profeſſion of the true Religion.

The Sixth Sermon on this Text.

HEB. X. 23.

Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering: For he is faithful that hath promiſed.

THESE words contain an Exhortation *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, and an Argument or Encouragement thereto, becauſe *he is faithful that hath promiſed*. By the Exhortation to *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, is not meant, that thoſe who are capable of examining the Grounds and Reaſons of their Religion ſhould blindly hold it faſt againſt the beſt Reaſons that can be offered; becauſe upon theſe terms, every Man muſt con-

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tinue in the Religion in which he happens to be fixt by Education, or an ill choice, be his Religion true or falſe, without examining and looking into it, whether it be right or wrong; for till a Man examines, every Man thinks his Religion right. That which the Apoſtle here exhorts Chriſtians *to hold faſt* is *the Ancient Faith*, of which all Chriſtians make a Solemn *profeſſion* in their *Baptiſm*; as plainly appears from the context. And this *Profeſſion of our Faith*, we are *to hold* in the following inſtances, which I ſhall but briefly mention, without enlarging upon them.

1. We are *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith* againſt the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reaſon to ſupport that Confidence.

2. And much more, againſt the Confidence of Men contrary to plain Scripture and Reaſon, and to the common Senſe of Mankind.

3. Againſt all the Temptations and Terrors of the World, againſt the Temptations of Faſhion and Example, and of Worldly Intereſt and Advantage, and againſt all Terrors and Sufferings of Perſecution.

4. Againſt

Serm. 9.

4. Againſt all vain promiſes of being put into a ſafer condition, and groundleſs hopes of getting to Heaven upon eaſier terms than the Goſpel hath propoſed, in ſome other Church and Religion.

Laſtly, We are *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*, againſt all the cunning Arts and Inſinuations of buſie and diſputing Men, whoſe deſign it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to make Proſelytes to their Party and Faction.

But without entring into theſe particulars, I ſhall in order to our Eſtabliſhment in the Reformed Religion which we profeſs, in oppoſition to the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, apply my ſelf at this time, to make a ſhort Compariſon betwixt the Religion which we profeſs, and that of the Church of *Rome*, that we may diſcern on which ſide the advantage of Truth lies; and in making this Compariſon, I ſhall inſiſt upon *three* things, which will bring the matter to an iſſue, and are, I think, ſufficient to determine every ſober and conſiderate Man, which of theſe he ought in Reaſon, and with regard to

Vol. I. the ſafety of his Soul, to embrace; and they are theſe.

I. That we govern our Belief and Practice in matters of Religion, by the true ancient Rule of Chriſtianity, the Word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures: But the Church of *Rome*, for the maintenance of their Errors and Corruptions, have been forced to deviſe a new Rule, never owned by the Primitive Church, nor by the Ancient Fathers and Councils of it.

II. That the Doctrines and Practices in difference betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, are either contrary to this Rule, or deſtitute of the Warrant and Authority of it, and are plain Additions to the ancient Chriſtianity, and Corruptions of it.

III. That our Religion hath many clear Advantages of that of the Church of *Rome*, not only very conſiderable in themſelves, but very obvious and diſcernable to an ordinary capacity, upon the firſt propoſal of them. I ſhall be as brief in theſe as I can.

I. That

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I. That we govern our belief and Practice in matters of Religion, by the true ancient Rule of Christianity, the Word of God contain'd in the Holy Scriptures: But the Church of *Rome*, for the maintaining of their Errors and Corruptions, have been forced to devise a new Rule, never owned by the Primitive Church, nor by the Ancient Councils and Fathers of it; that is, they have joyned with the Word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures, the unwritten Traditions of their Church, concerning several points of their Faith and Practice, which they acknowledge cannot be proved from Scripture, and these they call the unwritten Word of God; and the Council of *Trent* hath decreed them to be *of equal Authority with the Holy Scriptures*, and that they do *receive and venerate them with the same pious Affection and Reverence*; and all this, contrary to the express declaration and unanimous consent of all the Ancient Councils and Fathers of the Christian Church, (as I have already shewn;) and this never declar'd to be a point of Faith, till it was decreed,

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not much above a Hundred Years ago, in the Council of *Trent*. And this ſurely, if any thing, is a Matter of great conſequence, to preſume to alter the Ancient Rule of Chriſtian Doctrine and Practice, and to enlarge it, and add to it, at their pleaſure. But the Church of *Rome* having made ſo great a change in the Doctrine and Practice of Chriſtianity, it became conſequently neceſſary to make a change of the Rule: And therefore with great Reaſon did the Council of *Trent* take this into conſideration in the firſt place, and put it in the front of their Decrees, becauſe it was to be the foundation and main proof of the following Definitions of Faith, and Decrees of Practice, for which, without this new Rule, there had been no colour.

II. The Doctrines and Practices in difference betwixt us, and the Church of *Rome*, are either contrary to the true Rule; or deſtitute of the Warrant and Authority of it, and plain Additions to the Ancient Chriſtianity, and Corruptions of it. The Truth of this will beſt appear, by inſtancing in ſome of

of the principal Doctrines and Practices in difference betwixt us.

As for their two great fundamental Doctrines, of the Supremacy of the Bishop of *Rome* over all the Christians in the world, and the Infallibility of their Church, there is not one word in Scripture concerning these priviledges; nay it is little less than a demonstration that they have no such Priviledges, that St. *Paul* in a long Epistle to the Church of *Rome* takes no notice of them, that the Church of *Rome* either then was, or was to be soon after, the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, which is now grown to be an Article of Faith in the Church of *Rome*; and yet it is hardly to be imagined, that he could have omitted to take notice of such remarkable Priviledges of their Bishops and Church, above any in the world, had he known they had belonged to them. So that in all probability he was ignorant of those mighty Prerogatives of the Church of *Rome*; otherwise it cannot be, but that he would have written with more deference and submission to this Seat of Infallibility, and Center of Unity; he would certainly

Vol. I. have paid a greater Reſpect to this Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches, where the Head of the Church, and Vicar of Chriſt, either was already ſeated, or by the appointment of Chriſt was deſigned for ever to fix his Throne and eſtabliſh his Reſidence; but there is not one word, or the leaſt intimation of any ſuch thing throughout this whole Epiſtle, nor in any other part of the New Teſtament,

Beſides that both theſe pretended Priviledges are omitted, by plain Fact and Evidence of things themſelves; their *Supremacy*, in that the far greateſt part of the Chriſtian Church, neither is at this day, nor can be ſhewn by the Records of any Age, ever to have been ſubject to the Biſhop of *Rome*, or to have acknowledged his Authority and Juriſdiction over them: and the *Infallibility* of the Pope, whether with or without a General Council, about which they ſtill differ, though Infallibility was deviſed on purpoſe, to determine all differences; I ſay, this *Infallibility*, where-ever it is pretended to be, is plainly confuted by the contradictory Definitions of ſeveral

veral Popes and Councils; for if they have contradicted one another, as is plain, beyond all contradiction, in ſeveral inſtances, then there muſt of neceſſity be an Error on one ſide; and there can be no ſo certain demonſtration, that any one is infallible, as evident Error and Miſtake is of the contrary. Serm. 9.

Next, their concealing both the Rule of Religion, and the Practice of it in the Worſhip and Service of God, from the People, in an unknown Tongue; and their adminiſtring the Communion to the People in one kind only, contrary to clear Scripture, and the plain Inſtitution of our Bleſſed Saviour. And then their Worſhip of Images, and Invocation of Angels and Saints, and the Bleſſed Virgin, in the ſame Solemn manner, and for the ſame Bleſſings and Benefits which we beg of God himſelf; contrary to the expreſs Word of God, which commands us *to Worſhip the Lord our God, and to ſerve him only*; and which declares, that as there is but *one God*, ſo there is but *one Mediator between God and Man, Chriſt Jeſus*; but *one Mediator*, not only of *Redemption*, but of *Interceſſion* too; for the Apoſtle there ſpeaks of *a Mediator of Interceſſion*, by

Vol. 1. by whom only we are to offer up our Prayers, which are to be put up to God only; and which expreſly forbids Men to worſhip any Image or likeneſs. And the Learned men of their own Church acknowledg, that there is neither Precept nor Example for theſe Practices in Scripture, and that they were not uſed in the Chriſtian Church for ſeveral Ages; and this acknowledgment we think very conſiderable, ſince ſo great a part of their Religion, eſpecially as it is practiſed among the people, is contained in theſe points. For the Service of God in an Unknown Tongue, and withholding the Scriptures from the people, they do not pretend ſo much as One Teſtimony of any Father for the firſt 600 Years; and nothing certainly can be more unreaſonable in it ſelf, than to deny people the beſt means of knowing the Will of God, and not to permit them to underſtand what is done in the publick Worſhip of God, and what Prayers are put up to him in the Church.

The two great Doctrines of *Tranſubſtantiation* and *Purgatory* are acknowledged by many of their own learned Writers, to have no certain Foundation in

in Scripture: and that there are *ſeven Sacraments* of the Chriſtian Religion, tho it be now made an Article of Faith by the Council of *Trent*, is a thing which cannot be ſhewn in any Council or Father for above a Thouſand Years after Chriſt. And we find no mention of this Number of the Sacraments, till the Age of *Peter Lombard* the Father of the Schoolmen. Serm. 9.

That the Church of *Rome* is *the Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches*, tho' that alſo be one of the new Articles of Pope *Pius* the IV. his Creed, which their Prieſts are by a Solemn Oath obliged to believe and teach; yet is it moſt evidently falſe. That ſhe is not the Mother of all Churches is plain, becauſe *Jeruſalem* was certainly ſo; for *there* certainly was the firſt Chriſtian Church, and from thence all the Chriſtian Churches in the World derive themſelves: that ſhe is not, (tho' ſhe fain would be) the Miſtreſs of all Churches, is as evident, becauſe the greateſt part of the Chriſtian Church does at this day, and always did, deny that ſhe hath any Authority or Supremacy over them. Now theſe are the principal matters in difference betwixt us; and if theſe points, and a few more, be pared off from Popery,

pery, that which remains of their Religion, is the ſame with ours, that is, the true Ancient Chriſtianity.

III. I ſhall ſhew that our Religion hath many clear advantages of theirs, not only very conſiderable in themſelves, but very obvious and diſcernable to an ordinary capacity, upon the very firſt propoſal of them; as,

1. That our Religion agrees perfectly with the Scriptures, and all points both of our Belief and Practice, eſteemed by us as neceſſary to Salvation, are there contained, even our Enemies themſelves being Judges. We *worſhip the Lord our God, and him only* do we *ſerve*. We do not fall down before Images and Worſhip them: we addreſs all our Prayers to God alone, by the only Mediation and Interceſſion of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, as he himſelf hath given us Commandment, and as St. *Paul* doth plainly direct, giving us this plain and Subſtantial Reaſon for it, becauſe as there is but *one God*, ſo there is but *one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*.

The publick Worſhip and Service of God is perform'd by us in a Language which

which we understand, according to St. *Paul*'s express Order and Direction, and the universal Practice of the ancient Church, and the Nature and Reason of the thing it self. We administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in both kinds, according to our Saviour's Example and plain Institution, and the continual Practice of all the Christian Churches in the World, for above a thousand Years. Serm. 9.

2. We believe nothing as necessary to Salvation, but what hath been owned in all Ages to be the Christian Doctrine, and is acknowledged so to be by the Church of *Rome* it self; and we receive the whole Faith of the Primitive Christian Church, (*viz.*) What ever is contained in the Apostles Creed, and in the Explications of that in the Creeds of the four first General Councils. By which it plainly appears, that all points of Faith in difference betwixt us and the Church of *Rome* are meer Innovations and plain Additions to the ancient Christian Faith: but all that we believe, is acknowledged by them to be undoubtedly the ancient Christian Faith.

3. There is nothing wanting in our Church and Religion, whether in Matter

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ter of Faith or Practice, which either the Scripture makes neceſſary to Salvation, or was ſo eſteem'd by the Chriſtian Church for the firſt five Hundred Years; and we truſt, that what was ſufficient for the Salvation of Chriſtians in the beſt Ages of Chriſtianity, for five Hundred Years together, may be ſo ſtill; and we are very well content to venture our Salvation upon the ſame terms that they did.

4. Our Religion is not only free from all Idolatrous Worſhip, but even from all Suſpicion and probable Charge of any ſuch thing: but this the Church of *Rome* is not, as is acknowledged by her moſt Learned Champions, and as no Man of Ingenuity can deny; and the Reaſon which the Learned Men give, why the Worſhip of Images and the Invocation of Angels and Saints departed were not practiſed in the Primitive Church, for the firſt three Hundred Years, is a plain acknowledgment that theſe Practices are very liable to the Suſpicion of Idolatry; for they ſay, that the Chriſtians did then forbear thoſe Practices, becauſe they ſeem'd to come too near to the Pagan Idolatry, and leſt the Heathen

Heathen ſhould have taken occaſion to have juſtified themſelves, if theſe things had been practiſed among Chriſtians; and they cannot now be ignorant, what Scandal they give by theſe practices both to the *Jews* and *Turks*, and how much they alienate them from Chriſtianity by this Scandal; nor can they chuſe but be ſenſible, upon how great diſadvantage they are in defending theſe practices from the Charge of Idolatry, and that by all their blind Diſtinctions, with which they raiſe ſuch a Cloud and Duſt, they can hardly make any plauſible and tolerable Defence of themſelves from this Charge; inſomuch, that to ſecure their own People from diſcerning their Guilt in this Matter, they have been put upon that ſhameful ſhift of leaving out the Second Commandment in their common Catechiſms and Manuals, leſt the people ſeeing ſo plain a Law of God againſt ſo common a practice of their Church, ſhould upon that Diſcovery have broken off from them. Serm. 9.

5. Nor is our Religion incumbered with ſuch an endleſs number of ſuperſtitious and troubleſom Obſervances, as theirs infinitely

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infinitely is, even beyond the Number of the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies, to the great Burden and Scandal of the Chriſtian Religion, and the diverting of Mens Minds from the ſpiritual part of Religion, and the more weighty and neceſſary Duties of the Chriſtian Life; ſo that, in truth, a devout Paſtor is ſo taken up with the external Rites and little Obſervances of his Religion, that he hath little or no time to make himſelf a good Man, and to cultivate and improve his Mind in true Piety and Virtue.

6. Our Religion is evidently more Charitable to all Chriſtians that differ from us, and particularly to them, who, by their Uncharitableneſs to us, have done as much as is poſſible to diſcharge and damp our Charity towards them. And Charity, as it is one of the moſt eſſential Marks of a true Chriſtian, ſo it is likewiſe the beſt Mark and Ornament of a true Church; and of all things that can be thought of, methinks the want of Charity in any Church ſhould be a Motive to no Man to fall in love with it, and to be fond of its Communion.

7. Our Religion doth not claſh and interfere with any of the great Moral Duties,

Duties, to which all Mankind ſtand obliged by the Law and Light of Nature; as Fidelity, Mercy and Truth. We do not teach Men to break Faith with Hereticks or Infidels; nor to deſtroy and extirpate thoſe who differ from us, with Fire and Sword: No ſuch thing as Equivocation or Mental Reſervation, or any other Artificial way of Falſhood, is either taught or maintain'd, either by the Doctrine or by the Caſuiſts of our Church. Serm. 9.

8. Our Religion and all the Doctrines of it are perfectly conſiſtent with the Peace of Civil Government, and the Welfare of Humane Society. We neither exempt the Clergy from Subjection to the Civil Powers; nor abſolve Subjects upon any pretence whatſoever from allegiance to their Princes; both which Points, the neceſſity of the one, and the lawfulneſs of the other, have been taught and ſtifly maintain'd in the Church of *Rome*, not only by private Doctors, but by Popes and General Councils.

9. The Doctrines of our Religion, are perfectly free from all Suſpicion of a worldly Intereſt and Deſign; whereas the greateſt part of the erroneous

Vol. I. Doctrines with which we charge the Church of *Rome*, are plainly calculated to promote the end of worldly Greatneſs and Dominion.

The Pope's *Kingdom is plainly of this World*; and the Doctrines and Maximes of it, like ſo many *Servants*, are *ready* upon all occaſion *to fight for him.* For moſt of them do plainly tend, either to the Eſtabliſhment and Enlargement of his Authority; or to the Magnifying of the Prieſts, and the giving them a perfect power over the Conſciences of the People, and the keeping them in a ſlaviſh ſubjection and blind obedience to them. And to this purpoſe do plainly tend the Doctrines of exempting the Clergy from the Secular Power and Juriſdiction; the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation; for it muſt needs make the Prieſt a great Man in the opinion of the People, to believe that he can make God, as they love to expreſs it, without all Reaſon and Reverence. Of the like tendency is the Communicating of the Laity only in one kind, thereby making it the ſole Priviledge of the Prieſt to receive the Sacrament in both: The with-holding the Scripture from the People,

People, and celebrating the Service of God in an unknown Tongue: The Doctrine of an implicite Faith, and abſolute Reſignation of their Judgments to their Teachers: Theſe do all directly tend to keep the People in ignorance, and to bring them to a blind Obedience to the dictates of their Teachers. So likewiſe the Neceſſity of the intention of the Prieſt, to the ſaving Virtue and Efficacy of the Sacraments; by which Doctrine, the People do upon the matter depend as much upon the good will of the Prieſt, as upon the Mercy of God for their Salvation. But above all, their Doctrine of the Neceſſity of auricular and private Confeſſion of all Mortal Sins committed after Baptiſm, with all the Circumſtances of them to the Prieſt; and this not only for the eaſe and direction of their Conſciences, but as a neceſſary condition of having their Sins pardoned and forgiven by God: by which means they make themſelves Maſters of all the Secrets of the People, and keep them in awe by the knowledge of their faults, *Scire volunt ſecreta Domus atque inde timeri.* Or elſe their Doctrines tend to filthy lucre, and the Serm. 9.

enriching of their Church. As their Doctrines of Purgatory and Indulgences, and their Prayers and Masses for the dead, and many more Doctrines and Practices of the like kind plainly do.

10. Our Religion is free from all disingenuous and dishoneſt Arts of maintaining and ſupporting it ſelf. Such are clipping of ancient Authors, nay and even the Authors and Writers of their own Church, when they ſpeak too freely of any Point; as may be ſeen in their *Indices Expurgatorii* which much againſt their wills have been brought to light. To which I ſhall only add theſe three groſs Forgeries, which lie all at their doors, and they cannot deny them to be ſo.

1. The pretended *Canon* of the Council of *Nice* in the caſe of Appeals, between the Church of *Rome* and the *African* Church; upon which they inſiſted a great while very confidently, till at laſt they were convinced by Authentick Copies of the Canons of that Council.

2. *Conſtantine*'s Donation to the Pope, which

which they kept a great ſtir with, till the Forgery of it was diſcovered. Serm. 9.

3. The Decretal Epiſtles of the Ancient Popes; a large Volume of Forgeries, compiled by *Iſidore Mercator*, to countenance the Uſurpations of the Biſhop of *Rome*, and of which the Church of *Rome* made a great uſe for ſeveral Ages, and pertinaciouſly defended the Authority of them, till the Learned Men of their own Church have at laſt been forced for very ſhame to diſclaim them, and to confeſs the Impoſture of them. A like inſtance whereto is not I hope to be ſhewn in any Chriſtian Church. This is that which St. *Paul* calls Κυβεία, *the ſlight of Men*, ſuch as Gameſters uſe at Dice; for to alledge falſe and forged Authors in this Caſe, is to play with falſe Dice, when the Salvation of Mens Souls lies at ſtake.

11. Our Religion hath this mighty advantage, that it doth not decline Tryal and Examination, which to any Man of ingenuity muſt needs appear a very good Sign of an honeſt Cauſe; but if any Church be ſhy of having her Religion Examined, and her Doctrines and Practices brought into the open light, this gives juſt ground of

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Suſpicion that ſhe hath ſome diſtruſt of them; for Truth doth not ſeek corners, nor ſhun the light. Our Saviour hath told us who they are that *love darkneſs rather than light*, viz. *they* whoſe *deeds are Evil*; *for every one, ſaith he, that doth Evil, hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved and made manifeſt.* There needs no more to render a Religion ſuſpected to a wiſe Man, than to ſee thoſe who profeſs it, and make ſuch proud boaſts of the Truth and Goodneſs of it, ſo fearful that it ſhould be examin'd and lookt into, and that their People ſhould take the liberty to hear and read what can be ſaid againſt it.

12. We perſwade Men to our Religion by Human and Chriſtian ways, ſuch as our Saviour and his Apoſtles uſed, by urging Men with the Authority of God, and with Arguments fetcht from another World, the promiſe of eternal Life and happineſs, and the threatning of Eternal death and Miſery, which are the proper Arguments of Religion, and which alone are fitted to work upon the Minds and Conſciences of Men. The terror and

and torture of death may make Men Hypocrites, and awe them to profeſs with their Mouths what they do not believe in their Hearts; but this is no proper means of converting the Soul, and convincing the Minds and Conſciences of Men; and theſe violent and cruel ways cannot be denyed to have been Practiſed in the Church of *Rome*, and ſet on foot by the Authority of Councils, and greatly countenanced and encouraged by Popes themſelves; witneſs the many Croiſades for the extirpation of Hereticks, the ſtanding Cruelties of their Inquiſition, their occaſional Maſſacres and Perſecutions, of which we have freſh Inſtances in every Age. Serm. 9.

But theſe Methods of Converſion are a certain Sign that they either diſtruſt the Truth and Goodneſs of their Cauſe, or elſe that they think Truth and the Argumeuts for it are of no force, when Dragoons are their *Ratio ultima*, the laſt Reaſon which their Cauſe relies upon, and the beſt and moſt effectual it can afford.

Again, we hold no Doctrines in defiance of the Senſes of all Mankind; ſuch as is that of Tranſubſtantiation, which

Vol. I. is now declared in the Church of *Rome* to be a Neceſſary Article of Faith, ſo that a Man cannot be of that Religion, unleſs he will renounce his Senſes, and believe againſt the clear Verdict of them in a plain ſenſible matter: but after this, I do not underſtand how a Man can believe any thing, becauſe by this very thing he deſtroys and takes away the Foundation of all Certainty. If any Man forbid me to believe what I ſee, I forbid him to believe any thing upon better and ſurer Evidence. St. *Paul* ſaith, that *Faith cometh by hearing*: but if I cannot rely upon the certainty of Senſe, then the means whereby Faith is conveyed, is uncertain; and we may ſay, as St. *Paul* doth in another caſe, *Then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith alſo is vain.*

Laſtly, (To mention no more particulars) as to ſeveral things uſed and Practiſed in the Church of *Rome*, we are on the much ſafer ſide, if we ſhould happen to be miſtaken about them, than they are, if they ſhould be miſtaken: for it is certainly Lawful to read the Scriptures, and Lawful to permit to the People the uſe of the Scriptures

Scriptures in a known Tongue; Otherwiſe we muſt condemn the Apoſtles and the Primitive Church for allowing this Liberty. It is certainly Lawful to have the publick Prayers and Service of God celebrated in a Language which all that joyn in it can underſtand. It is certainly Lawful to adminiſter the Sacrament of the Lords Supper to the People in both kinds; otherwiſe the Chriſtian Church would not have done it for a thouſand Years. It is certainly Lawful, not to Worſhip Images, not to pray to Angels, or Saints, or the Bleſſed Virgin; otherwiſe the Primitive Church would not have forborn theſe Practices for three Hundred Years, as is acknowledged by thoſe of the Church of *Rome*. Serm. 9.

Suppoſe a Man ſhould pray to God only, and offer up all his Prayers to him only by Jeſus Chriſt, without making mention of any other Mediator or Interceſſor with God for us, relying herein upon what the Apoſtle ſays concerning our *High Prieſt*, *Jeſus the Son of God*, Heb. 7. 25. *That he is able to ſave them to the utmoſt, who come unto God by him*, (*i. e.*) by his Mediation

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diation and Interceſſion, *ſince he ever liveth to make Interceſſion for them*; might not a Man reaſonably hope to obtain of God all the Bleſſings he ſtands in need of, by addreſſing himſelf only to him, in the Name and by the Interceſſion of that *one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus?* Nay, why may not a Man reaſonably think, that this is both a ſhorter and more effectual way to obtain our requeſts, than by turning our ſelves to the Angels and Saints, and importuning them to ſolicite God for us; eſpecially if we ſhould order the matter ſo, as to make ten times more frequent Addreſſes to theſe, than we do to God and our Bleſſed Saviour, and in compariſon of the other, to neglect theſe. We cannot certainly think any more able to help us and do us good, than the great God of Heaven and Earth, *the God* (as the Pſalmiſt ſtyles him) *that heareth Prayers*, and therefore *unto him ſhould all fleſh come*. We cannot certainly think any Interceſſor ſo powerful and prevalent with God, as his only and dearly beloved Son, offering up our Prayers to God in Heaven, by virtue of that moſt acceptable and invaluable Sacrifice,

fice, which he offered to him on Earth. We cannot ſurely think, that there is ſo much Goodneſs any where as in God; that in any of the Angels or Saints, or even in the Bleſſed Mother of our Lord, there is more Mercy and Compaſſion for Sinners, and a tenderer ſenſe of our Infirmities, than in the Son of God, who *is at the right hand of his Father, to appear in the Preſence of God for us.* We are ſure that God always hears the Petitions which we put up to him; and ſo does the Son of God, by whom we put them up to the Father, becauſe he alſo is *God bleſſed for evermore.* But we are not ſure that the Angels and Saints hear our Prayers, becauſe we are ſure that they are neither Omniſcient nor Omnipreſent, and we are not ſure, nor prabably certain, that our Prayers are made known to them any other way, there being no Revelation of God to that purpoſe. We are ſure that God hath declared himſelf to be *a jealous God*, and that *he will not give his Honour to another*; and we are not ſure but that Prayer is part of the Honour which is due to God alone; and if it were not, we can hardly think but that Serm. 9.

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that God ſhould be ſo far from being pleaſed, with our making ſo frequent uſe of thoſe other Mediators and Interceſſors, and from granting our deſires the ſooner upon that account; that on the contrary we have reaſon to think, he ſhould be highly offended, when he himſelf is ready to receive all our Petitions, and hath appointed a great Mediator to that purpoſe, to ſee more Addreſſes made to, and by the Angels and Saints, and Bleſſed Virgin, than to himſelf by his Bleſſed Son; and to ſee the Worſhip of himſelf almoſt joſtled out, by the Devotion of People to Saints and Angels, and the Bleſſed Mother of our Lord; a thing which he *never Commanded*, and which ſo far as appears by Scripture, *never came into his mind*. I have been the longer upon this matter, to ſhew how unreaſonable and needleſs at the beſt, this more than half part of the Religion of the Church of *Rome* is; and how ſafely it may be let alone.

But now on the other hand, if they be miſtaken in theſe things, as we can demonſtrate from Scripture they are, the danger is infinitely great on that ſide; for then they oppoſe an Inſtitution

ſtitution of Chriſt, who appointed the Sacrament to be received in both kinds; and they involve themſelves in a great danger of the guilt of Idolatry, and our common Chriſtianity in the ſcandal and reproach of it; and this without any neceſſity, ſince *God hath required none of theſe things at our hands*; and after all the buſtle which hath been made about them, the utmoſt they ptetend (which yet they are not able to make good) is, that theſe things may Lawfully be done; and at the ſame time they cannot deny, but that if the Church had not enjoyned them, they might Lawfully be let alone. And can any thing be more unreaſonable, than ſo pertinaciouſly to inſiſt upon things ſo hard, I might ſay impoſſible to be defended or excuſed, and which by their own acknowledgment are of no great weight and neceſſity; in which we are certainly ſafe in not doing them, if they ſhould prove Lawful; but if they do not prove ſo, they are in a moſt dangerous condition; ſo that here is certain ſafety on the one hand, and the danger of damnation on the other; which is as great odds as is poſſible? Serm. 9.

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And they muſt not tell us that they are in no danger, becauſe they are infallible, and cannot be miſtaken; they muſt prove that point a great deal better than they have yet done, befor it can ſignifie any thing either to our Satisfaction or their Safety.

I might have inſiſted more largely upon each of theſe Particulars, any one of which is of weight to incline a Man to that Religion, which hath ſuch an advantage on its ſide; but all of them together make ſo Powerful an Argument to an unprejudiced Perſon, as muſt almoſt irreſiſtably determine his choice; for moſt of the Particulars are ſo evident, that they cannot, upon the very mention and propoſal of them, be denied to be clear Advantages on our ſide.

And now, to uſe the words of St. *Peter*, *I teſtifie unto you, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand*, that the Reformed Religion which we profeſs, and which by the goodneſs of God is by Law eſtabliſhed in this Nation, is the true Ancient Chriſtianity, *the Faith* which was *at firſt delivered to the Saints*, and which is conveyed down to us in the Writings of

of the Apoſtles and the Evangeliſts of our Lord and Saviour. *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; and hold faſt; for he is Faithful that hath promiſed*, which is the *Second* part of the *Text*; the encouragement which the Apoſtle gives us *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; he is Faithful that hath promiſed* to give us *his Holy Spirit to lead us into all Truth, to eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, and ſettle us* in the Profeſſion of it, to ſupport and comfort us under all Tryals and Temptations, and *to ſeal us up to the day of Redemption*, and *he is faithful that hath promiſed* to reward our conſtancy and fidelity to him and his Truth, with *a Crown of everlaſting life and Glory. Wherefore my beloved Brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as you know that your labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord; for he is faithful that hath promiſed*; and *let us provoke one another to Charity and Good Works, which are the* great Ornament and Glory of any Religion, and *ſo much the more, becauſe the day approacheth in which God will judge the* belief and lives *of Men by Jeſus Chriſt*, not according to the imperious

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imperious and uncharitable dictates of any Church, but *according to the Goſpel of his Son; To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all Honour and Glory now and for ever.*

Now the God of Peace which brought again from the Dead the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlaſting Covenant, make you Perfect in every good word and work; working in you that which is pleaſing in his Sight. And *the Peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

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SERMON X.

The Chriſtian Life, a Life of Faith.

2 COR. V. 7.

For we walk by Faith, not by Sight.

IN the latter part of the former Chapter, the Apoſtle declares what it was that was the great ſupport of Chriſtians, under the Perſecutions and Sufferings which befel them; *viz.* the Aſſurance of a Bleſſed Reſurrection to another life, Verſe 14. *Knowing that he which raiſed up the Lord Jeſus, ſhall raiſe up us alſo by Jeſus; for which cauſe, ſaith he,* verſe 16. *we faint not; but though our outward Man periſh, our inward Man is renewed day by day;* that is, though our Bodies, by Reaſon of the Hardſhips and Sufferings which we undergo, are

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continually decaying and declining; yet our Minds grow every day more healthful and vigorous, and gain new ſtrength and reſolution, by contemplating the Glory and Reward of another World, and as it were feeding upon them by Faith; *for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilſt we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen.*

And he reſumes the ſame Argument again at the beginning of this Chapter; *For we know, that if our Earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a Building of God, a Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*; that is, we are firmly perſwaded, that when we die, we ſhall but exchange theſe Earthly and Periſhing Bodies, theſe Houſes of Clay, for a Heavenly Manſion, which will never decay nor come to ruine: from whence he concludes, Verſe 6. *Therefore we are always confident*, θαῤῥοῦντες ἐν πάντοτε, therefore what ever happens to us, we are always of good courage, and ſee no reaſon to be afraid of Death; *knowing that whilſt we are at home in the Body, we*

we are abſent from the Lord; that is, ſince our continuance in the Body is to our diſadvantage, and while we live, we are abſent from our Happineſs; and when we die, we ſhall then enter upon the Poſſeſſion of it. That which gives us this confidence and good courage, is our Faith; for tho' we be not actually poſſeſt of this Happineſs which we ſpeak of, yet we have a firm perſwaſion of the reality of it, which is enough to ſupport our Spirits, and keep up our Courage under all afflictions and adverſities whatſoever, Verſe 7. *For we walk by Faith, not by Sight.* Ser. 10.

Theſe words come in by way of *Parentheſis*, in which the Apoſtle declares in general, what is the ſwaying and governing Principle of a Chriſtian life; not only in caſe of perſecution and affliction, but under all events, and in every condition of Humane life; and that is, Faith; in oppoſition to Sight and preſent Enjoyment: *We walk by Faith*, and *not by Sight. We walk by Faith*; what ever Principle ſways and governs a Man's life and actions, he is ſaid to walk and live by it. And as here a Chriſtian is ſaid to *walk by Faith*, ſo elſewhere *the juſt* is ſaid to *live by Faith.*

Vol. 1. Faith is the Principle which animates all his reſolutions and actions.

And *not by Sight.* The word is, εἶδος, which ſignifies the thing it ſelf in preſent view and poſſeſſion, in oppoſition to a firm perſwaſion of things future and inviſible. Sight is the thing in Hand, and Faith the thing only in Hope and Expectation. Sight is a clear view and apprehenſion of things preſent and near to us; Faith an obſcure diſcovery and apprehenſion of things at a diſtance: So the Apoſtle tells us, 2 *Cor.* 13. 12. *Now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly*; this is Faith; *but then face to face*, this is preſent ſight, as one Man ſees another face to face; and thus likewiſe the ſame Apoſtle diſtinguiſheth betwixt Hope and Sight, *Rom.* 8. 24, 25. *Hope that is ſeen, is not Hope; for what a Man ſees, why doth he yet Hope for it? but if we Hope for that which we ſee not, then do we with patience wait for it.* Sight is poſſeſſion and enjoyment; Faith is the firm perſwaſion and expectation of a thing; and this the Apoſtle tells us was the governing principle of a Chriſtian's life; *For we walk by Faith, and not by Sight*; from which words I ſhall obſerve theſe Three things.

I. That

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I. That Faith is the Governing Principle, and that which bears the great ſway in the Life and Actions of a Chriſtian; *we walk by Faith*; that is, we Order and Govern our Lives in the Power and Virtue of this Principle.

II. Faith is a degree of aſſent inferiour to that of Senſe. This is ſufficiently intimated in the oppoſition betwixt Faith and Sight. He had ſaid before, that *whilſt we are at home in the Body, we are abſent from the Lord*; and gives this as a Reaſon and Proof of our abſence from the Lord, *for we walk by Faith, and not by Sight*; that is, whilſt we are in the Body, we do not ſee and enjoy, but believe and expect; if we were preſent with the Lord, then Faith would ceaſe, and be turned into Sight; but tho' we have not that aſſurance of another world, which we ſhall have when we come to ſee and enjoy theſe things, yet we are firmly perſwaded of them.

III. Notwithſtanding Faith be an inferiour degree of aſſurance, yet 'tis a Principle of ſufficient power to govern our Lives; *we walk by Faith*; it is ſuch

Vol. I. and Aſſurance as hath an influence upon our Lives.

I. That Faith is the Governing Principle, and that which bears the great ſway in the Life and Actions of a Chriſtian. *We walk by Faith*; that is, we Order and Govern our Lives in the Power and Virtue of this Principle. A Chriſtian's Life conſiſts in obedience to the will of God; that is, in a readineſs to do what he commands, and in a willingneſs to ſuffer what he calls us to; and the great Arguments and Encouragements hereto, are ſuch things as are the Objects of Faith, and not of Senſe; ſuch things as are abſent and future, and not preſent and in poſſeſſion. For Inſtance, the Belief of an inviſible God, of a ſecret Power and Providence, that Orders and Governs all things, that can bleſs or blaſt us, and all our Deſigns and Undertakings, according as we demean our ſelves towards him, and endeavour to improve our ſelves to him; the Perſwaſion of a ſecret aid and influence always ready at hand, to keep us from Evil, and to ſtrengthen and aſſiſt us to that which is good; more eſpecially the firm Belief, and expecta-

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tion of the Happineſs of Heaven, and the glorious Rewards of another world, which tho' they be now at a diſtance, and inviſible to us, yet being grounded upon the Promiſe of *God that cannot lie*, ſhall certainly be made good. Ser. 10.

And this Faith, this firm Perſwaſion of abſent and inviſible things, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* tells us, was the great Principle of the Piety and Virtue of good Men from the beginning of the World. This he calls, *Ch.* 11. *verſe* 1. the ὑπόστασις, or *the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the proof* or *evidence of things not ſeen, viz.* a firm perſwaſion of the Being and Providence of God, and of the Truth and Faithfulneſs of his Promiſes. Such was the Faith of *Abel*, he believed *that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of thoſe that faithfully ſerve him.* Such was the Faith of *Noah*, who being warned of God, of things at a great diſtance, and not ſeen as yet, notwithſtaning believed the Divine Prediction concerning the Flood, and prepared an Ark: Such alſo was the Faith of *Abraham*, concerning a numerous Poſterity by *Iſaac*, and the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*; and

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such likewise was the Faith of *Moses*, he did as firmly believe the invisible God, and the recompence of reward, as if he had beheld them with his eyes.

And of this Recompence of Reward, we Christians have a much clearer revelation, and much greater assurance, than former Ages and Generations had; and the firm belief and perswasion of this, is the great Motive and Argument to a Holy life; *The hope which is set before us* of obtaining the Happiness, and the fear of incurring the Misery, of another world. This made the Primitive Christians, with so much patience to bear the Sufferings and Persecutions, with so much constancy to venture upon the dangers and inconveniencies which the love of God and Religion exposed them to.

Under the former Dispensation of the Law, tho' good Men received good hopes of the Rewards of another life, yet these things were but obscurely revealed to them, and the great inducements to Obedience were Temporal Rewards and Punishments; the Promises of long life, and peace, and plenty, and prosperity, in that good Land which God had given them, and the threatnings of War,

War, and Famine, and Peſtilence, and being delivered into Captivity. But now, under *the Goſpel, Life and Immortality are brought to light*; and the great Arguments that bear ſway with Chriſtians, are the Promiſes of Everlaſting Life, and the Threatnings of Eternal Miſery; and the firm Belief and Perſuaſion of theſe is now the great Principle that governs the Lives and Actions of good Men: for what will not Men do, that are really perſuaded, that as they do demean themſelves in this World, it will fare with them in the other? That *the Wicked ſhall go into everlaſting Puniſhment, and the Righteous into Life Eternal.* I proceed to the Ser. 10.

II. Obſervation, namely, That Faith is a Degree of Aſſent, inferiour to that of Senſe. This is intimated in the Oppoſition betwixt Faith and Sight; *We walk by Faith*, and *not by Sight*; that is, we believe theſe things, and are confidently perſuaded of the truth of them, tho' we never ſaw them, and conſequently cannot poſſibly have that Degree of Aſſurance concerning the Joys of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, which

which thoſe have who enjoy the One and endure the Other.

There are different Degrees of Aſſurance concerning things, ariſing from the different Degrees of Evidence we have for them. The higheſt Degree of Evidence we have for any thing, is our own Senſe and Experience; and this is ſo firm and ſtrong, that it is not to be ſhaken by the utmoſt Pretence of a Rational Demonſtration; Men will truſt their own Senſes and Experience, againſt any ſubtilty of Reaſon whatſoever: But there are inferiour degrees of Aſſurance concerning things, as the Teſtimony and Authority of Perſons every way credible: and this Aſſurance we have in this ſtate concerning the things of another World, we believe with great Reaſon, that we have the Teſtimony of God concerning them, which is the higheſt kind of Evidence in it ſelf; and we have all the reaſonable aſſurance we can deſire, that God hath teſtified theſe things, and this is the utmoſt aſſurance which things future and at a diſtance are capable of.

But yet it is an unreaſonable obſtinacy to deny, that this falls very much ſhort of that degree of aſſurance which thoſe

thoſe Perſons have concerning theſe things, who are now in the other World, and have the Senſe and Experience of theſe things. And this is not only intimated here in the Text, in the Oppoſition of Faith and Sight, but is plainly expreſt in other Texts of Scripture; 1 *Cor.* 13. 9, 10. *We know now but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part ſhall be done away.* That degree of knowledge and aſſurance which we have in this Life is very imperfect, in compariſon to what we ſhall have hereafter; and Ver. 12. *We now ſee as through a Glaſs darkly,* ἐν αἰνίγματι, *as in a Riddle,* in which there is always a great deal of Obſcurity; all which Expreſſions are certainly intended by way of abatement and diminution to the certainty of Faith; becauſe it is plain, that by *that which is in part* or *imperfect*, the Apoſtle means Faith and Hope, which he tells us ſhall ceaſe, when *that which is perfect*, meaning Viſion and Sight, is come. We ſee likewiſe in Experience, that the Faith and Hope of the beſt Chriſtians in this Life is accompanied with doubting concerning theſe things, and all doubting is a degree of uncertainty, but thoſe bleſ-

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sed Souls who are enter'd upon the Possession of Glory and Happiness, and those miserable Wretches who lye groaning under the Wrath of God and the Severity of his Justice, cannot possibly, if they would, have any doubt concerning the Truth and Reality of these things.

But however contentious Men may dispute against common Sense, this is so plain a Truth, that I will not labour in the farther Proof of it; nor indeed is it reasonable, while we are in this state, to expect that degree of assurance concerning the Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which the sight and sensible experience of them would give us; and that upon these Two Accounts;

1. Because our present state will not admit it; and,

2. If it would, it is not reasonable we should have it.

1. Our present state will not admit it. For while we are in this World, it is not possible we should have that sensible Experiment and Tryal how things are in the other. The things of the other World are remote from us, and far out of our Sight, and we cannot have any

any experimental knowledge of them, till we our ſelves enter into that ſtate. Thoſe who are already paſt into it know how things are; thoſe happy Souls who live in the reviving preſence of God, and are poſſeſt of thoſe joys which we cannot now conceive, underſtand theſe things in another manner, and have a more perfect aſſurance concerning them, than it is poſſible for any Man to have in this World; and thoſe wretched and miſerable Spirits who feel the vengeance of God, and are plunged into the Horrors of Eternal Darkneſs, do believe upon irreſiſtible evidence, and have other kind of Convictions of the Reality of that ſtate, and the inſupportable Miſery of it, than any Man is capable of in this World. Ser. 10.

2. If our preſent ſtate would admit of this high degree of aſſurance, it is not fit and reaſonable that we ſhould have it. Such an over-powering evidence would quite take away the virtue of Faith, and much leſſen that of Obedience. Put the caſe that every Man, ſome conſiderable time before his departure out of this Life, were permitted to viſit the other World, to aſſure him how things are there, to view the Manſions of the Bleſſed,

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sed, and to survey the dark and loathsome Prisons of the Damned, to hear the lamentable outcrys of Miserable and Despairing Souls, and to see the inconceivable Anguish and Torments they are in; after this, what virtue would it be in any Man to believe these things? He that had been there and seen them, could not dis-believe them if he would. Faith in this case would not be virtue, but necessity. And therefore it is observable, that our Saviour doth not Pronounce them Blessed, who believed his Resurrection, upon the forcible evidence of their own Senses, but, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* They might be Happy in the Effects of that Faith, but there is no praise, no reward belongs to that Faith which is wrought in Man by so violent and irresistible an evidence. It was the great commendation of *Abraham's* Faith, that *against hope he believed in hope*, he believed the promise of God concerning a thing in it self very improbable: but it is no commendation at all to believe the things which we have seen, because they admit of no manner of dispute; no Objection can be offered to shake our assent, unless we will run to the extremity of Scepticism; for if we will

will believe any thing at all, we muſt yield to the Evidence of Senſe. This does ſo violently enforce our aſſent, that there can be no Virtue in ſuch a Faith. Ser. 10.

And as this would take away the Virtue of Faith, ſo it would very much leſſen that of our Obedience. It is hardly to be imagined, that any Man who had ſeen the Bleſſed condition of good Men in another World, and been an Eye-witneſs of the intolerable Torments of Sinners, ſhould ever after be tempted knowingly to do any thing that would deprive him of that Happineſs, or bring him *into that place of Torment*. Such a ſight could not chuſe but affect a Man as long as he lived; and leave ſuch impreſſions upon his mind, of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of a Holy life, and of the infinite danger of a wicked courſe, that we might ſooner believe that all the Men in the World ſhould conſpire to kill one another, than that ſuch a Man, by conſenting to any deliberate Act of Sin ſhould wilfully throw himſelf into thoſe flames: No, his Mind would be continually haunted with thoſe Furies he had ſeen Tormenting Sinners in another World, and the fearful Shrieks and Outcries of Miſera-

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ble Souls would be perpetually ringing in his Ears; and the Man would have ſo lively and terrible an imagination of the Danger he was running himſelf upon, that no temptation would be ſtrong enough to conquer his fears, and to make him careleſs of his life and actions, after he had once ſeen how *fearful a thing it was to fall into the hands of the living God*: So that in this caſe, the Reaſon of Mens obedience would be ſo violent, that the Virtue of it muſt be very little; for what praiſe is due to any Man, not to do thoſe things which none but a perfect mad Man would do? For certainly that Man muſt be beſides himſelf, that could by any Temptation be ſeduced to live a wicked life, after he had ſeen the ſtate of good and bad Men in the other World; the glorious Rewards of Holineſs and Virtue, and the diſmal event of a vitious and ſinful courſe. God hath deſigned this Life for the Trial of our Virtue, and the exerciſe of our obedience; but there would hardly be any place for this, if there were a free and eaſie paſſage for us into the other World, to ſee the true ſtate of things there. What argument would it be of any Mans virtue to forbear ſinning, after he

he had been in *Hell*, and ſeen the miſerable end of Sinners? But I proceed to the Ser. 10.

III. And *Laſt* Obſervation; namely, That notwithſtanding Faith be an inferiour degree of Aſſent, yet it is a Principle of ſufficient force and power to Govern our lives. *We walk by Faith.* Now, that the belief of any thing may have its Effect upon us, it is requiſite that we be ſatisfied of theſe Two things.

1. Of the Certainty, and 2. Of the great Concernment of the thing. For if the thing be altogeter uncertain, it will not move us at all, we ſhall do nothing towards the obtaining of it, if it be good; nor for the avoiding and preventing of it, if it be evil: and if we are certain of the thing, yet if we apprehend it to be of no great Moment and Concernment, we ſhall be apt to ſlight it, as not worth our regard: but the Rewards and Puniſhments of another world, which the Goſpel propounds to our Faith, are fitted to work upon our Minds, both upon account of the Certainty and Concernment of them. For,

1. We have ſufficient Aſſurance of the Truth of theſe things, as much as

Vol. 1. we are well capable of in this ſtate. Concerning things future and at a diſtance, we have the dictates of our Reaſon arguing us into this Perſwaſion, from the conſideration of the Juſtice of the Divine Providence, and from the promiſcuous and unequal Adminiſtration of things in this world; from whence wiſe men in all Ages have been apt to conclude, that there will be another ſtate of things after this life, wherein rewards and puniſhments ſhall be equally diſtributed. We have the general conſent of Mankind in this matter: and to aſſure us, that theſe Reaſonings are true, we have a moſt credible Revelation of theſe things, God having ſent his Son from Heaven to declare it to us, and given us a ſenſible demonſtration of the thing, in his Reſurrection from the dead, and his viſible Aſcenſion into Heaven; ſo that there is no kind of evidence wanting, that the thing is capable of, but only our own ſenſe and experience of theſe things, of which we are not capable in this preſent ſtate. And there is no Objection againſt all this, but what will bring all things into uncertainty, which do not come under our Senſes, and which we our ſelves have not ſeen.

Nor

Ser. 10.

Nor is there any conſiderable Intereſt to hinder Men from the Belief of theſe things, or to make them heſitate about them. For as for the other World, if at laſt there ſhould prove to be no ſuch thing, our Condition after Death will be the ſame with the Condition of thoſe who disbelieve theſe things; becauſe all will be extinguiſh'd by Death: but if things fall out otherwiſe (as moſt undoubtedly they will) and our Souls after this Life do paſs into a ſtate of Everlaſting Happineſs or Miſery, then our great Intereſt plainly lies, in preparing our ſelves for this State; and there is no other way to ſecure the great Concernments of another World, but by believing thoſe things to be true, and governing all the Actions of our Lives by this Belief. And as for the Intereſts of *this* Life, they are but ſhort and tranſitory, and conſequently of no conſideration in compariſon of the things which are Eternal; and yet (as I have often told you) ſetting aſide the caſe of Perſecution for Religion, there is no real Intereſt of this World, but it may be as well promoted and purſued to as great Advantage, nay, uſually, to a far greater, by him that believes theſe things, and lives accordingly,

Vol. 1. ly, than by any other Perſon: For the Belief of the Rewards and Puniſhments of another World is the greateſt Motive and Encouragement to Virtue; and as all Vice is naturally attended with ſome temporal Inconvenience, ſo the Practice of all Chriſtian Virtues doth in its own Nature tend both to the Welfare of Particular Perſons, and to the Peace and Proſperity of Mankind.

But that which ought to weigh very much with us, is, That we have abundantly more Aſſurance of the Recompence of another World, than we have of many things in this World, which yet have a greater Influence upon our Actions, and govern the Lives of the moſt prudent and conſiderate Men. Men generally hazard their Lives and Eſtates upon Terms of greater Uncertainty, than the Aſſurance which we have of another World. Men venture to take Phyſick upon *probable* Grounds of the Integrity and Skill of their Phyſician; and yet the want of either of theſe may hazard their Lives; and Men take Phyſick upon greater Odds; for it certainly cauſeth Pain and Sickneſs, and doth but uncertainly procure and recover Health; the Patient is ſure to be made ſick, but not certain

certain to be made well; and yet the Danger of being worſe, if not of dying, on the one Hand, and the Hope of Succeſs and Recovery on the other, make this Hazard and Trouble reaſonable. Men venture their whole Eſtates to Places which they never ſaw; and that there are ſuch Places, they have only the concurrent Teſtimony and Agreement of Men; nay, perhaps, have only ſpoken with them that have ſpoken with thoſe that have been there. No Merchant ever inſiſted upon the Evidence of a Miracle to be wrought, to ſatisfie him that there were ſuch Places as the *Eaſt* and *Weſt-Indies*, before he would venture to Trade thither: And yet *this* Aſſurance God hath been pleaſed to give the World of a ſtate beyond the Grave, and of a bleſſed Immortality in another Life. Ser. 10.

Now what can be the Reaſon that ſo ſlender Evidence, ſo ſmall a degree of Aſſurance will ſerve to encourage Men to ſeek after the things of this World with great Care and Induſtry; and yet a great deal more will not ſuffice to put them effectually upon looking after the great Concernments of another World, which are infinitely more conſiderable?

Vol. I. No other Reaſon of this can be given, but that Men are partial in their Affections towards theſe things. It is plain they have not the ſame Love for God and Religion, which they have for this World and the Advantages of it; and therefore it is, that a leſs degree of Aſſurance will engage them to ſeek after the one, than the other; and yet the Reaſon is much ſtronger on the other ſide: For the greater the Benefit and Good is, which is offered to us, we ſhould be the more eager to ſeek after it, and ſhould be content to venture upon leſs Probability. Upon *exceſſive* Odds, a Man would venture upon very ſmall Hopes; for a *mighty* Advantage, a Man would be content to run a great Hazard of his Labour and Pains upon little Aſſurance. Where a Man's *Life* is concern'd, every ſuſpicion of danger will make a Man careful to avoid it. And will nothing affright Men from Hell, unleſs God carry them thither, and ſhew them the place of Torments, and the Flames of that Fire which ſhall *never be quenched*?

I do not ſpeak this, as if theſe things had not abundant Evidence; I have ſhewn that they have; but to convince Men,

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Men, how unreaſonable and cruelly partial they are about the Concernments of their Souls, and their Eternal Happineſs.

2. Suppoſing theſe things to be real and certain, they are of infinite Concernment to us. For what can concern us more, than that Eternal and Unchangeable State in which we muſt be fixt and abide for ever? If ſo vaſt a Concern will not move us, and have no Influence upon the Government of our Lives and Actions, we do not deſerve the Name of Reaſonable Creatures. What Conſideration can be ſet before Men, who are not touched with the Senſe of ſo great an Intereſt, as that of our Happy or Miſerable Being to all Eternity? Can we be ſo ſolicitous and careful about the Concernment of a *few* Days; and is it nothing to us what becomes of us for ever? Are we ſo tenderly concerned to avoid Poverty and Diſgrace, Perſecution and Suffering in this World; and ſhall we not much more *flee from the wrath which is to come*, and endeavour *to eſcape the damnation of Hell*? Are the ſlight and tranſitory Enjoyments of this World worth ſo much Thought and Care? And is an Eternal Inheri-

tance in the Heavens not worth the looking after? As there is no proportion betwixt the things which are Temporal and the things which are Eternal, ſo we ought in all Reaſon, to be infinitely more concerned for the One than for the Other.

The proper inference from all this Diſcourſe is, That we would endeavour, to ſtrengthen in our ſelves this great Principle of a Chriſtian Life, the Belief of another World, by repreſenting to our ſelves all thoſe Arguments and Conſiderations which may confirm us in this Perſwaſion. The more reaſonable our Faith is, and the ſurer grounds it is built upon, the more firm it will abide, when it comes to the tryal, againſt all the impreſſions of temptations and aſſaults of Perſecution. If our Faith of another World be only a ſtrong imagination of theſe things, *ſo ſoon as tribulation ariſeth, it will wither; becauſe it hath no root in it ſelf.* Upon this account the Apoſtle ſo often exhorts Chriſtians, to endeavour *to be eſtabliſht in the Truth, to be rooted and grounded in the Faith*, that when Perſecution comes, they may *continue ſtedfaſt and unmovable.* The firmneſs of our Belief will have

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a great influence upon our Lives; If we be *ſtedfaſt and unmovable* in our perſwaſion of theſe things, we ſhall be *abundant in the work of the Lord.* The Apoſtle joyns theſe together, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know your labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* *Stedfaſt and unmovable*, in what? In the belief of a bleſſed Reſurrection; which the more firmly any Man believes, the more active and induſtrious will he be in the Work any Service of God. Ser. 10.

And that our Faith may have a conſtant and powerful influence upon our Lives, we ſhould frequently revolve in our Minds the thoughts of another World, and of that vaſt Eternity which we ſhall ſhortly launch into. The great diſadvantage of the Arguments fetcht from another world, is this, That theſe things are at a diſtance from us, and not ſenſible to us, and therefore we are not apt to be ſo affected with them; Preſent and ſenſible things weigh down all other Conſiderations. And therefore to balance this diſadvantage, we ſhould often have theſe Thoughts in our Minds, and inculcate

culcate upon our ſelves the certainty of theſe things, and the infinite concernment of them; we ſhould reaſon thus with our ſelves; If theſe things be true, and will certainly be, why ſhould they not be to me, as if they were actually preſent? Why ſhould not I always live, as if Heaven were open to my view, and *I ſaw Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God*, with Crowns of Glory in his hands, ready to be ſet upon the Heads of all thoſe who continue faithful and obedient to him? And why ſhould I not be as much afraid to commit any Sin, as if *Hell were naked before me*, and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing Miſeries of the Damned?

Thus we ſhould, by frequent Meditation, repreſent theſe great things to our ſelves, and bring them nearer to our Minds, and oppoſe to the preſent temptations of Senſe the great and endleſs Happineſs and Miſery of the other World. And if we would but thus exerciſe our ſelves about *the things which are not ſeen*, and make Eternity familiar to our ſelves, by a frequent Meditation of it, we ſhould be very little moved with preſent and ſenſible things; we ſhould *walk* and *live* by Faith, as the

the Men of the World do by *Senſe*, and be more ſerious and earneſt in the Purſuit of our great and everlaſting Intereſt, than they are in the purſuit of Senſual Enjoyments, and ſhould make it the great Buſineſs of this preſent and temporal Life, to ſecure a Future and Eternal Happineſs. Ser. 10.

SER-

SERMON XI.

The Danger of Apoſtaſie from the true Religion.

HEB. X. 38.

But if any Man draw back, my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.

THE great Deſign of this Epiſtle, (whoever was the Author of it, which I ſhall not now enquire into) is plainly this, to confirm the *Jews*, who were but newly converted to *Chriſtianity*, in the ſtedfaſt Profeſſion of that Faith, which they had embraced, and to arm them againſt that Temptation, which Chriſtians were then expoſed to, *viz.* the fierce and cruel Perſecutions, which threatned thoſe of that Profeſſion.

And

Vol. I. And to this purpoſe, he repreſents to them the Excellency of that Religion, above any other former Revelation, that God had made of himſelf to the World; both in reſpect of the Author and Revealer of it, who was the Son of God, and in reſpect of the Revelation it ſelf; which, as it contains better, and more perfect Directions for a good Life, ſo likewiſe more powerful and effectual Motives thereto, better Promiſes, and more terrible Threatnings, than were annexed to the Obſervation of the *Jewiſh* Law, or clearly and certainly diſcoverable by the Light of Nature. From theſe Conſiderations, he earneſtly perſwades them, all along throughout this Epiſtle, to continue conſtant in the Profeſſion of this Faith, and not to ſuffer themſelves to be frighted out of it by the Terrour of Perſecution; Chap. 2. V. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip*; and Chap. 4. 1. *Let us therefore fear, leſt a Promiſe being left us, of entring into his reſt, any of you ſhould come ſhort of it*; and verſe 23. of this Chapter, *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith, without wavering*;

ing; and to encourage them to constancy, he sets before them the Glorious Rewards and Recompences of the Gospel, Verse 35. *Cast not away therefore your Confidence,* τὴν παῤῥησίαν ὑμῶν, *your free and open profession of Christianity, which hath great Recompence of Reward.* Ser. 11.

And then on the other hand, to deter them from Apostasie from this Profession, he represents to them the horrible danger of it, here in the Text, *But if any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him.*

I shall briefly explain the Words, and then prosecute that which I mainly intended in them. *If any Man draw back,* Ἐὰν ὑποστείληται: These Words, with the foregoing, are cited out of the Prophet *Habakkuk*, Chap. 2. Verse 3, 4. and they are cited by the Apostle, according to the Translation of the LXX. which differs somewhat from the *Hebrew*; and the difference ariseth from the various readings of the *Hebrew* Word, which is rendred by the LXX. *to draw back*; but by the change of a Letter signifies *to be lifted up*, as we render it in the Prophet; but however that be, the Apostle follows the Translation of the

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the LXX. and accommodates it to his Purpose. Ἐὰν ὑποστείληται, *if any Man draw back*; the Word signifies to keep back, to withdraw, to sneak and slink away out of fear, to fail, or faint in any enterprize: And thus this Word is render'd in the New Testament. *Acts* 20. 20. ἐδὲν ὑπεστειλάμην, *I did not with-hold*, or *keep back any thing that was profitable for you*; and so it is said of St. *Peter*, *Gal.* 2. 12. ὑπέστελλεν ἑαυτὸν, *he slunk away*, or *withdrew himself, fearing them of the Circumcision*; and the *Hebrew* Word which is here render'd by the LXX. *to draw back*, is elsewhere render'd by ἐκλείπειν, which is *to fail* or *faint*; from all which it appears, that by *drawing back*, the Apostle here means, Mens quitting their Profession of Christianity, and slinking out of it, for fear of suffering for it.

My Soul shall have no pleasure in him: These Words are plainly a μείωσις, and less is said than is meant; for the meaning is, that God will be extreamly displeased with them, and punish them very severely. The like Figure to this, you have *Psal.* 5. 4. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in Wickedness*, which in the next

next Verſe is explained, by his hatred and deteſtation of thoſe who are guilty of it, *Thou hateſt all the workers of iniquity.* So that the plain Senſe of the words is this, that Apoſtaſie from the profeſſion of God's true Religion, is a thing highly provoking to him, and will be moſt ſeverely puniſht by him. Ser. 11.

In ſpeaking to this Argument, I ſhall conſider theſe *four* things.

I. The Nature of this ſin of Apoſtaſie from Religion.

II. The ſeveral ſteps and degrees of it.

III. The heinouſneſs of it.

IV. The great danger of it, and the terrible puniſhment it expoſeth men to. And when I have ſpoken to theſe, I ſhall conclude all with a ſhort Exhortation, *to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering.*

I. We will conſider the Nature of this ſin of Apoſtaſie from Religion; and it conſiſts in forſaking or renouncing the Profeſſion of Religion, whether it be by an open declaration in words, or a virtual

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tual declaration of it by our actions; for it comes all to one in the ſight of God, and the different manner of doing it, does not alter the nature of the thing. He indeed that renounceth Religion, by an open declaration in words, offers the greateſt and boldeſt defiance to it: but he is likewiſe an Apoſtate, who ſilently withdraws himſelf from the Profeſſion of it, who quits it for his intereſt, or for fear diſowns it, and ſneaks out of the Profeſſion of it, and forſakes the Communion of thoſe who own it. Thus *Demas* was an Apoſtate, in quitting Chriſtianity for ſome worldly intereſt. *Demas hath forſaken* us, *having loved this preſent world*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. And thoſe whom our Saviour deſcribes, *Mat.* 13. 20, 21. *who receiv'd the word into ſtony ground*, were Apoſtates out of fear, *they heard the word, and with joy receiv'd it, but having no root in themſelves, they endured but for a while, and when tribulation and perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, preſently they fall off.*

And there is likewiſe a partial Apoſtaſie from Chriſtianity, when ſome Fundamental Article of it is denied, whereby in effect and by conſequence, the whole Chriſtian Faith is overthrown. Of this

this *Hymeneus* and *Philetus* were guilty, of whom the Apostle says, that *they erred concerning the truth, saying that the Resurrection was past already, and thereby overthrew the faith of some*, 2 Tim. 2. 17, 18; that is, they turned the Resurrection into an Allegory, and did thereby really destroy a most Fundamental Article of the Christian Religion. Ser. 11.

So that to make a man an Apostate, it is not necessary that a man should solemnly renounce his Baptism, and declare Christianity to be false; there are several other ways whereby a man may bring himself under this guilt; as by a silent quitting of his Religion, and withdrawing himself from the Communion of all that profess it; by denying an Essential Doctrine of Christianity; by undermining the great End and Design of it, by teaching Doctrines which directly tend to encourage men in impenitence, and a wicked course of life, nay, to Authorise all manner of impiety and vice, in telling men that whatever they do they cannot Sin; for which, the Primitive Christians did look upon the *Gnosticks*, as no better than Apostates from Christianity; and tho they retained the Name of Christians, yet not to

Vol. I. be truly and really ſo. And there is likewiſe a partial Apoſtaſie from the Chriſtian Religion; of which I ſhall ſpeak under the

II. Head I propoſed, which was, to conſider the ſeveral ſorts and degrees of Apoſtaſie. The higheſt of all, is the renouncing and forſaking of Chriſtianity, or of ſome Eſſential part of it, which is a virtual Apoſtaſie from it: But there are ſeveral tendencies towards this, which they who are guilty of, are in ſome degree guilty of this Sin. As,

1. Indifferency in Religion, and want of all ſort of Concernment for it; when a Man, tho' he never quitted his Religion, yet is ſo little concerned for it, that a very ſmall Occaſion or Temptation would make him do it; he is contented to be reckoned in the number of thoſe who profeſs it, ſo long as it is the Faſhion, and he finds no great Inconvenience by it; but is ſo indifferent in his Mind about it, (like *Gallio, who minded none of thoſe things*) that he can turn himſelf into any other Shape, when his Intereſt requires it; ſo that tho' he never actually deſerted it, yet he is a kind of Apoſtate, in the preparation

and

and diſpoſition of his Mind: And to ſuch Perſons, that Title which *Solomon* gives to ſome, may fitly enough be applyed, they are *Backſliders in Heart.* Ser. 11.

2. Another tendency to this Sin, and a great degree of it, is withdrawing from the Publick Marks and Teſtimonies of the Profeſſion of Religion, by forſaking the Aſſemblies of Chriſtians for the Worſhip and Service of God; to withdraw our ſelves from thoſe, for fear of Danger or Suffering, is a kind of Denyal of our Religion. And this was the caſe of ſome in the Apoſtles time, when Perſecution grew hot, and the open Profeſſion of Chriſtianity dangerous; to avoid this Danger, many appeared not in the Aſſemblies of Chriſtians, for fear of being obſerved and brought into trouble for it. This the Apoſtle taxeth ſome for, in this Chapter, and ſpeaketh of it as a letting go our Profeſſion, and a kind of deſerting of Chriſtianity, v. 23, 25. *Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.* He doth not ſay, they had quitted their Profeſſion, but they had but a

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3. A light temper of Mind, which eaſily receives Impreſſions from thoſe who lie in wait to deceive and ſeduce Men from the Truth. When Men are not well rooted and eſtabliſhed in Religion, they are apt *to be inveigled by the crafty Inſinuations of Seducers, to be moved with every wind of Doctrine*, and *to be eaſily ſhaken in Mind*, by every trifling piece of Sophiſtry, that is confidently obtruded upon them for a weighty Argument.

Now this is a temper of Mind which diſpoſeth Men to Apoſtaſie, and renders them an eaſie Prey to every one that takes a Pleaſure and a Pride in making Proſelytes. It is true indeed, a Man ſhould always have a Mind ready to entertain Truth, when it is fairly propoſed to him: but the main things of Religion are ſo plainly revealed, and lie ſo obvious to every ordinary capacity, that every Man may diſcern them; and when he hath once entertained them, ought to be ſtedfaſt and unmovable in them, and not ſuffer himſelf to be whiffled out of them, by any inſignificant noiſe about the Infallibility of a Viſible Church; much leſs ought

ought he to be moved by any Man's uncharitableneſs and poſitiveneſs, in damning all that are not of his Mind. Ser. 11.

There are ſome things ſo very plain, not only in Scripture, but to the common Reaſon of Mankind, that no ſubtilty of Diſcourſe, no pretended Authority, or even Infallibility of any Church, ought to ſtagger us in the leaſt about them; as that we ought not, or cannot believe any thing in direct contradiction to Senſe and Reaſon; that the People ought to Read and Study the Holy Scriptures; and to ſerve God and pray to him in a Language which they underſtand; that they ought to receive the Sacrament as our Saviour inſtituted and appointed it, that is, in both kinds; that it can neither be our Duty, nor Lawful to do that which God hath forbidden, as he hath done the Worſhip of Images in the Second Commandment, as plainly as words can do it. Upon any one of theſe Points, a Man would fix his foot, and ſtand alone againſt the whole World.

4. Another Degree of Apoſtaſie is, a departure from the Purity of the Chriſtian Doctrine and Worſhip, in

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a groſs and notorious manner. This is a partial, tho' not a total Apoſtaſie from the Chriſtian Religion, and there have been and ſtill are ſome in the World, who are juſtly Charged with this degree of Apoſtaſie from Religion; namely ſuch, as tho' they retain and profeſs the Belief of all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and Worſhip *the only true* God and *him whom he hath ſent, Jeſus Chriſt*; yet have greatly perverted the Chriſtian Religion, by ſuperinducing, and adding new Articles of Faith, and groſs Corruptions and Superſtitions in Worſhip, and impoſing upon Men the Belief and Practice of theſe, as neceſſary to Salvation. And St. *Paul* is my Warrant for this Cenſure, who chargeth thoſe who added to the Chriſtian Religion, the Neceſſity of Circumciſion, and obſerving the Law of *Moſes*, and thereby perverted the Goſpel of Chriſt, as guilty in ſome degree of Apoſtaſie from Chriſtianity; for he calls it, *preaching another Goſpel*, *Gal.* 1. 7, 8. *There be ſome that trouble you, and would pervert the Goſpel of Chriſt: but tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Goſpel to you, than that which we have preached, let him be accurſed.* And thoſe who were

were ſeduced by theſe Teachers, he chargeth them with having in ſome ſort quitted the Goſpel of Chriſt, and embraced another Goſpel, V. 6. *I marvel that ye are ſo ſoon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Chriſt, unto another Goſpel.* So that they who thus pervert and corrupt the Chriſtian Doctrine or Worſhip, are plainly guilty of a partial Apoſtaſie from Chriſtianity; and they who quit the purity of the Chriſtian Doctrine and Worſhip, and go over to the Communion of thoſe who have thus perverted Chriſtianity, are in a moſt dangerous ſtate, and in the Judgment of St. *Paul*, are in ſome ſort *removed unto another Goſpel.* I ſhall now proceed, in the Ser. III.

III. Place, to conſider the Heinouſneſs of this Sin. And it will appear to be very Heinous, if we conſider, what an affront it is to God, and how great a contempt of him. When God hath revealed his will to Mankind, and ſent no leſs Perſon than *his own Son* out of his own *Boſom* to do it, and hath given ſuch Teſtimonies to him from Heaven, by *ſigns and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*;

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Ghost; when he hath transmitted down to us, so Faithful a Record of this Revelation, and of the Miracles wrought to confirm it, in the Books of the Holy Scriptures; and when we our selves have so often declared our firm belief of this Revelation: yet after all this to fall from it, and deny it, or any part of it, or to embrace Doctrines and Practices plainly contrary to it; this certainly cannot be done without the greatest affront and contempt of the Testimony of God himself; for it is in effect, and by interpretation, to declare, that either we do not believe what God says, or that we do not fear what he can do. So St. *John* tells us, 1 *Ep.* 5. 10. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Lyar, because he believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son.*

And all along in this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Apostle sets himself to aggravate this Sin; calling it *an Evil Heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God, Ch.* 3. 12. And he frequently calls it so, κατ' ἐξοχήν, and by way of eminency, as being of all Sins the greatest and most heinous. *Ch.* 10. 26. *If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth.* That the Apostle here speaks

ſpeaks of the Sin of Apoſtaſie, is plain from the whole ſcope of his diſcourſe; for having exhorted them before, *v.* 23. *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of their Faith without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling of themſelves together*, he immediately adds, *for if we ſin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth*; that is, if we fall off from Chriſtianity, after we have embraced it. And, *Ch.* 12. 1. *let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which ſo eaſily beſets us*, that is, the great Sin of Apoſtaſie from Religion, to which they were then ſo ſtrongly tempted by that fierce Perſecution which attended it; and therefore he adds, *let us run with patience the race which is ſet before us*, that is, let us arm our ſelves with patience againſt the Sufferings we are like to meet with in our Chriſtian courſe. To oppoſe the Truth, and reſiſt the clear Evidence of it, is a great Sin, and Men are juſtly condemned for it. *John* 3. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the World, and men loved darkneſs rather than light*: But to deſert the Truth after we have been convinced of it, to fall off from the Profeſſion of it, after we have embraced it; is a much greater Sin. Oppoſition to the Truth, may

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may proceed in a great meaſure from ignorance and prejudice, which is a great extenuation; and therefore St. *Paul* tells us, that after all his violent Perſecution of Chriſtianity, *he found Mercy, becauſe he did it ignorantly and in unbelief.* To revolt from the Truth, after we have made profeſſion of it, *after we have known the way of righteouſneſs, to turn from the holy commandment*; this is the great aggravation. The Apoſtle makes wilfulneſs, an uſual ingredient into the Sin of Apoſtaſie, *if we ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth.*

And as the Sin is one of the greateſt affronts to God, ſo it is the higheſt and moſt effectual diſparagement of Religion: for it is not ſo much conſidered, what the Enemies of Religion ſpeak againſt it, becauſe *they ſpeak evil of the things which they knew not*, and of which they have had no Tryal and Experience; but he that falls off from Religion, after he hath made profeſſion of it, declares to the World that he hath tryed it, and diſlikes it, and pretends to leave it, becauſe he hath not found that Truth and Goodneſs in it which he expected, and upon long experience of

of it, sees reason to prefer another Religion before it: So that nothing can be more despiteful to Religion than this, and more likely to bring it into contempt; and therefore the Apostle (*v.* 29. of this Chapter) calls it a *trampling under foot the Son of God, and making the Blood of the Covenant a profane thing, and offering despite to the Spirit of Grace*: for we cannot put a greater Scorn upon the Son of God, who revealed this Doctrine to the World; nor upon his Blood, which was shed to confirm and seal the Truth of it; and upon the Holy Ghost, who came down in miraculous Gifts to give Testimony to it; than notwithstanding all this, to renounce this Doctrine, and to forsake this Religion. But we shall yet farther see the heinousness of this Sin, in the terrible Punishment it exposeth Men to; which was the Ser. 11.

IV. And *Last* thing I proposed to consider. And this is represented to us in a most terrible manner, not only in this Epistle, but in other Places of Scripture. This Sin is placed in the highest rank of pardonable Sins, and next to the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which

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which our Saviour declares to be abſolutely unpardonable. And indeed the Scripture ſpeaks very doubtfully of the pardonableneſs of this Sin, as being near akin to that againſt the Holy Ghoſt, being ſaid to be an *Offering deſpite to the Spirit of Grace.* In the *6th* Chapter of this Epiſtle, V. 4, 5, 6. the Apoſtle ſpeaks in a very ſevere manner, concerning the ſtate of thoſe, who had apoſtatized from Chriſtianity, after the ſolemn Profeſſion of it in Baptiſm; *It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightned* (that is baptized) *and have taſted of the Heavenly Gift,* (that is Regeneration) *and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come,* (that is, have been inſtructed in the Chriſtian Religion, and endowed with the miraculous Powers of the Goſpel-Age, for the *Jews* uſed to call the Age of the Meſſias, *Seculum Futurum*, or, *the World to come*) *it is impoſſible for thoſe to be renewed again unto repentance*; where the leaſt we can underſtand, by *impoſſible*, is, that it is extreamly difficult; for ſo the word *impoſſible* is ſometimes uſed; as when our Saviour ſays, *it is impoſſible for*

for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And, *Ch.* 10. 26. the Apoſtle ſpeaking of the ſame thing, ſays, *if we ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for ſin*; that is, they who renounce Chriſtianity, ſince they reject the only way of expiation, *there remains no more Sacrifice for their Sins.* Ser. 11.

St. *Peter* likewiſe expreſſeth himſelf very ſeverely concerning this ſort of Perſons, 2 *Epiſt.* 2. 20, 21. *For if after they have eſcaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, (that is, after they have been brought from Heathenism to Chriſtianity) *they are entangled therein again, and overcome*; *the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.* He ſeems loth to ſay, how ſad the Condition of ſuch Perſons is; but this he tells them, that it is much worſe than when they were Heathens before; and he gives the Reaſon, *for it had been better for them, not to have known the way of Righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them.* And St. *John* calls this Sin of Apoſtaſie, the *Sin unto Death*; and tho he do not forbid Chriſtians to

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to pray for them that are guilty of it; yet he will not say, that they should pray for them. 1 *Epist.* 5. 16. *If any Man see his Brother sin a Sin, which is not unto Death, he shall ask, and he shall give him Life, for them that sin not unto Death; there is a sin unto Death, I do not say, that he shall pray for it.* Now that by this *sin unto Death*, the Apostle means Apostasie from the Christian Religion to Idolatry, is most probable from what follows, Verse 18. *we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not*, (that is this Sin unto Death) *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not*, (that is, he is preserved from Idolatry, unto which the Devil had seduced so great a part of Mankind) *and we know that we are of God, and the whole World,* ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, *is under the dominion of that wicked one*, (viz. the Devil, whom the Scripture elsewhere calls *the God of this World*;) *and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true*, (that is, hath brought us from the Worship of false Gods, to the knowledge and Worship of the true God;) and then he concludes, *little Children, keep your selves from Idols*;

which

which caution hath no manner of dependence upon what went before; unleſs we underſtand *the Sin unto Death*, in this Senſe; and it is the more probable, that it is ſo to be underſtood, becauſe Apoſtaſie is ſo often in this *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, called *the Sin*, by way of Eminency, as it is here, by St. *John*, *whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not.* Ser. 11.

So that at the very beſt, the Scripture ſpeaks doubtfully of the pardon of this ſin; however, that the puniſhment of it, unrepented of, ſhall be very dreadful. It ſeems to be mildly expreſt here in the Text, *If any man draw back, my Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him*: But it is the more ſevere, for being expreſt ſo mildly, according to the intention of the Figure here uſed; and therefore in the next words, this expreſſion of God's taking no pleaſure in ſuch Perſons, is explained by their utter Ruin and Perdition; *But we are not of them that draw back unto Perdition.* And in ſeveral parts of this *Epiſtle*, there are very ſevere paſſages to this purpoſe; *Ch.* 2. 2, 3. *If the word ſpoken by Angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect*

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ſo great ſalvation? And *Ch.* 10. 26, 27. *If we ſin wilfully, after we have recieved the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſary. He that deſpiſed Moſes law, dyed without mercy, under two or three witneſſes; of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, that hath trodden under foot the Son of God!* &c. *For we know him who hath ſaid, Vengeance is mine, I will recompence, ſaith the Lord:* And again, *The Lord ſhall judge his People. It is a feaful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* What can be more ſevere and terrible than theſe expreſſions?

I will mention but one *Text* more, and that is *Rev.* 21. 8. where in the Catalogue of great Sinners, thoſe who Apoſtatize from Religion, out of fear, do lead the Van; *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things*, (which is elſewhere in this Book expreſt, by continuing *faithful unto the Death.*) *He that overcometh, ſhall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son: but the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and whoremongers, and*

and ſorcerers, and idolaters, and all lyars, ſhall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death. The fearful, and unbelievers, and lyars; that is, they who out of fear relapſe into infidelity, and abide not in the Truth, ſhall be reckoned in the firſt rank of Offenders, and be puniſhed accordingly. Ser. 11.

And thus I have done with the *Four* things I propounded to ſpeak to, from theſe words; the Nature of Apoſtaſie; the ſeveral ſteps and degrees of it; the heinous Nature of this Sin; the danger of it, and the terrible puniſhment it expoſeth Men to.

And is there any need now, to exhort men *to hold faſt the profeſſion of Faith*, when the danger of *drawing back* is ſo evident, and ſo terrible? or is there any reaſon and occaſion for it? Certainly there is no great danger amongſt us, of Mens Apoſtatizing from Chriſtianity, and turning *Jews*, or *Turks*, or *Heathens*; I do not think there is, but yet for all that, we are not free from the danger of Apoſtaſie; there is great danger, not of Mens Apoſtatizing from one Religion to another, but from Religion to Infidelity, and

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Atheiſm; and of this worſt kind of Apoſtaſie of all other, I wiſh the Age we live in had not afforded us too many inſtances. It is greatly to be lamented, that among thoſe who have profeſt Chriſtianity, any ſhould be found, that ſhould make it their endeavour to undermine the great Principles of all Religion; the Belief of a God, and his Providence; and of the Immortality of the Souls of Men; and a ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments after this Life; and to bring the moſt ſerious matters in the World into contempt, and to turn them into jeſt and raillery. This is not only a Renouncing of Chriſtianity, the Religion which God hath revealed, but even of the Religion which is born with us, and the Principles and Notions which God hath planted in every Man's Mind; this is an Impiety of the Firſt Magnitude, and not to be mentioned without grief and horror; and this, it is to be feared, hath had a great hand in thoſe great Calamities which our eyes have ſeen; and I pray God, it do not draw down ſtill more and greater Judgments upon this Nation: But I hope there are none here that need to be cautioned againſt this

this horrible impiety, and higheſt degree of *Apoſtaſie from the living God*: that which People are much more in danger of, is Apoſtaſie from the Purity of the Chriſtian Doctrine and Worſhip, ſo happily recovered by a regular Reformation, and eſtabliſht amongſt us, by all the Authority that Laws, both Eccleſiaſtical and Civil, can give it; and which in Truth is no other than the Ancient and Primitive Chriſtianity; I ſay, a defection from this, to thoſe groſs Errors and Superſtitions, which the Reformation had paired off, and freed us from. I do not ſay, that this is a total Apoſtaſie from Chriſtianity; but it is a partial Apoſtaſie and Defection, and a very dangerous one; and that thoſe, who *after they have received the knowledge of the truth*, fall off from it into thoſe Errors and Corruptions, are highly guilty before God, and their condition certainly worſe, and more dangerous, than of thoſe who are brought up in thoſe Errors and Superſtitions, and never knew better: for there are terrible threatnings in Scripture againſt thoſe, who fall away from the Truth, which they once embraced, and were Ser. 11.

Vol. 1. convinced of; *If we ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, &c. and *if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.*

God conſiders every Man's Advantages and Oportunities of Knowledge, and their Diſadvantages likewiſe, and makes all reaſonable Allowances for them; and for Men to continue in the Errors they have been always brought up in; or, which comes much to one, in Errors which they were led into by Principles early infuſed into them, before they were in any meaſure competent Judges of thoſe matters; I ſay, for ſuch Perſons to continue in theſe Errors, and to oppoſe and reject the contrary Truths, againſt which, by their Education, they have received ſo ſtrong and violent a Prejudice, this may be in a great degree excuſable, and find Pardon with God, upon a general Repentance for all Sins, both known and unknown, and cannot be reaſonably charged with the Guilt of this great Sin of Apoſtaſie: But not to abide in the Truth, after we have entertain'd and profeſs'd it, having ſufficient Means and Advantages of knowing it, hath no Excuſe.

I would not be raſh in condemning Particular Perſons of any Society or Communion of Chriſtians, provided they be ſincerely devout, and juſt, and ſober, to the beſt of their Knowledge; I had much rather leave them to God, whoſe mercies are great, than to paſs an uncharitable Cenſure upon them, as to their Eternal State and Condition: But the Caſe is far otherwiſe, where the Opportunities of Knowledge are afforded to Men, and *men love darkneſs rather than light*; for they who have the means and Advantages of *knowing their Maſter's will*, are anſwerable to God, as if they had known it; becauſe if they had not been groſly negligent, and wanting to themſelves, they might have known it.

And this I fear is the Caſe of the generality of thoſe, who have been bred up to years of Conſideration and Choice in the Reformed Religion, and forſake it; becauſe they do it without ſufficient Reaſon, and there are invincible Objections againſt it. They do it without ſufficient Reaſon; becauſe every one amongſt us knows, or may know, upon very little Enquiry that we hold all the Articles of the Faith, which are contained in the Ancient Creeds of the Chri-

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ſtian Church, and into which all Chriſtians are baptized; that we inculcate upon Men the Neceſſity of a good Life, and of ſincere Repentance, and perfect Contrition for our Sins, ſuch as is follow'd with real Reformation and Amendment of our Lives, and that without this, no Man can be ſaved by any Device whatſoever.

Now what Reaſon can any Man have, to queſtion whether he may be ſaved in that Faith which ſaved the firſt Chriſtians, and by believing the Twelve Articles of the Apoſtles Creed, tho he cannot ſwallow the Twelve Articles which are added to it in the Creed, of Pope *Pius* IV. every one of which, beſides many and great Corruptions and Superſtitions in Worſhip, are ſo many and invincible Objections againſt the Communion of the *Roman* Church, as I could particularly ſhew, if it had not been already done, in ſo many learned Treatiſes upon this Argument? What is there then, that ſhould move any reaſonable Man to forſake the Communion of our Church, and to quit the Reformed Religion?

There

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There are Three things chiefly with which they endeavour to amuſe and affright weaker Minds.

1. A great Noiſe of Infallibility, which they tell us is ſo excellent a means to determine and put an end to all Differences. To which I ſhall at preſent only Object this Prejudice; That there are not wider and hotter Differences among us, about any thing whatſoever, than are amongſt them about this admirable means of ending all Differences; as, where this Infallibility is ſeated, that Men may know how to have recourſe to it, for the ending of Differences.

2. They endeavour to fright Men with the danger of Schiſm. But every Man knows, that the Guilt of Schiſm lies at their Door, who impoſe ſinful Articles of Communion; and not upon them, who for fear of ſinning againſt God, cannot ſubmit to thoſe Articles; which we have done, and ſtill are ready to make good, to be the Caſe betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*. But,

3. The terrible Engine of all is, their poſitive and confident damning of all that live and die out of the Communion of their Church. This I have fully ſpoken

Vol. I. ken to upon another Occaſion, and therefore ſhall only ſay at preſent, that every Man ought to have better Thoughts of God, than to believe, that he, *who delighteth not in the death of ſinners*, and *would have all men to be ſaved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*, will confirm the Sentence of ſuch uncharitable Men, as take upon them to condemn Men for thoſe things, for which our Saviour in his Goſpel condemns no Man. And of all things in the World, one would think, that the Uncharitableneſs of any Church ſhould be an Argument to no Man, to run into its Communion.

I ſhall conclude with the Apoſtle's Exhortation, *ver.* 23. of this Chapter, *Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; and provoke one another to charity and good works; and ſo much the more, becauſe the Day approacheth, in which God will judge the faith and lives of men, by Jeſus Chriſt, according to his Goſpel.*

SER-

SERMON XII.

Of Self-denyal and Suffering for Chriſt's ſake.

The Firſt Sermon on this Text.

MATTH. XVI. 24.

Then ſaid Jeſus unto his Diſciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow me.

THEN *ſaid Jeſus to his Diſciples*, that is, upon Occaſion of his former Diſcourſe with them, wherein he had acquainted them with his approaching Paſſion, that he muſt ſhortly go up to *Jeruſalem*, and there ſuffer many things of the *Elders* and *Chief Prieſts* and *Scribes*, and at laſt be put to Death by them; *then ſaid Jeſus unto his Diſciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow me.* If

Vol. I. *If any man will come after me, or follow me*; that is, If any man will be my Diſciple, and undertake the Profeſſion of my Religion; If any man chuſe and reſolve to be a Chriſtian; he muſt be ſo upon theſe Terms, he muſt *deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs and follow me*; he muſt follow me in Self-denyal and Suffering.

In the handling of theſe Words, I ſhall do theſe *four* things.

I. I ſhall conſider the way and method which our Saviour uſeth in making Proſelytes, and gaining Men over to his Religion. He offers no manner of Force and Violence to compel them to the Profeſſion of his Religion; but fairly offers it to their Conſideration and Choice, and tells them plainly upon what terms they muſt be his Diſciples; and if they be contented and reſolved to ſubmit to theſe Terms, well; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer; for *they cannot be his Diſciples.*

II. I ſhall endeavour to explain this Duty of Self-denyal, expreſt in theſe Words, *Let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs and follow me.*

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III. I ſhall conſider the ſtrict and indiſpenſable Obligation of it, whenever we are call'd to it, *Without this we cannot be Chriſt's Diſciples*; *If any man will come after me*, or *be my Diſciple, let him deny himſelf.*

IV. I ſhall endeavour to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this Precept, of ſelf-denyal and ſuffering for Chriſt, which at firſt appearance may ſeem to be ſo very harſh and difficult; and I ſhall go over theſe Particulars as briefly as I can.

I. We will conſider the way and method which our Saviour here uſeth in making Proſelytes, and gaining men over to his Religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profeſſion of his Religion; but fairly propoſeth it to their Conſideration and Choice, telling them plainly upon what terms they muſt be his Diſciples; if they like them, and are content, and reſolved to ſubmit to them, well; he is willing to receive them, and own them for his Diſciples; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer: For *they cannot be*

Vol. I. *be his Diſciples.* As on the one hand, he offers them no worldly Preferment and Advantage, to entice them into his Religion, and to tempt them outwardly to profeſs what they do not inwardly believe; ſo on the other hand, he does not hale and drag them by force, and awe them by the terrours of torture and death to ſign the Chriſtian Faith, tho' moſt undoubtedly true, and to confeſs with their mouths, and ſubſcribe with their hands, what they do not believe in their hearts. He did not obtrude his Sacraments upon them, and plunge them into the water to Baptize them, whether they would or no, and thruſt the Sacrament of Bread into their mouths; as if men might be Worthy Receivers of that Bleſſed Sacrament, whether they receive it willingly or no.

Our Bleſſed Saviour, the Author and Founder of our Religion, made uſe of none of theſe ways of violence, ſo contrary to the nature of man, and of all Religion, and eſpecially of Chriſtianity, and fitted only to make men Hypocrites, but not Converts; he only ſays, *If any man will be my Diſciple*; he uſeth no Arguments, but ſuch as are Spi-

Spiritual, and proper to work upon the Minds and Conſciences of Men. For as his *Kingdom was not of this world*, ſo neither are the Motives and Arguments to induce Men to be his ſubjects, taken from this world; but from the endleſs Rewards and Puniſhments of another. *The weapons* which he made uſe of, to ſubdue Men to the obedience of Faith, were not *carnal*; and yet they were *mighty through God*, to conquer the obſtinacy and infidelity of men. This great and infallible Teacher, who certainly came from God, all that he does, is to propoſe his Religion to Men, with ſuch Evidence and ſuch Arguments as are proper to convince Men of the Truth and Goodneſs of it, and to perſwade Men to embrace it; and he acquaints them likewiſe with all the worldly Diſadvantages of it, and the hazards and ſufferings that would attend it; and now, if upon full conſideration, they will make his Religion their free Choice, and become his Diſciples, he is willing to receive them; if they will not, he underſtands the nature of Religion better, than to go about to force it upon Men, whether they will or no. Ser. 12.

H. I ſhall

Vol. 1. II. I ſhall endeavour to explain this Duty or Precept of ſelf-denial, expreſt in theſe words, *Let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs.* Theſe are difficult Terms, for a Man *to deny himſelf*, and *take up his own Croſs*, that is, willingly to ſubmit to all thoſe Sufferings which the malice of Men may inflict for the ſake of Chriſt and his Religion. For this Expreſſion of *taking up one's Croſs*, is a plain Alluſion to the *Roman* Cuſtom, which was this, That he that was condemned to be Crucified, was to take his Croſs upon his Shoulders, and to carry it to the place of Execution; this the *Jews* made our Saviour to do, as we read, *Joh.* 19. 17. till that being ready to faint under it, and leſt he ſhould die away before he was nailed to the Croſs, they compelled *Simon* of *Cyrene* to carry it for him, as is declar'd by the other Evangeliſts: and yet he tells them, *they that will be his Diſciples muſt follow him, bearing their own Croſs*, that is, being ready (if God call them to it) to ſubmit to the like ſufferings for Him and his Truth, which he was ſhortly to undergo for the Truth, and for their ſakes. But

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But tho' theſe terms ſeem very hard; yet they are not unreaſonable, as I ſhall ſhew in the concluſion of this Diſcourſe. Some indeed have made them ſo by extending this ſelf-denyal too far, attending more to the latitude of the Words, than to the meaning and ſcope of our Saviour's Diſcourſe: For there is no doubt, but that there are a great many things, which may properly enough be called ſelf-denyal, which yet our Saviour never intended to oblige Chriſtians to. It is, no doubt, great ſelf-denyal, for a Man, without any Neceſſity, to deny himſelf the neceſſary Supports of Life; for a Man to ſtarve and make away himſelf: but no Man certainly ever imagined, that our Saviour ever intended by this Precept, to enjoyn this kind of ſelf-denyal.

It is plain then, that there is no Reaſon nor Neceſſity to extend this Precept of our Saviour, concerning ſelf-denyal, to every thing that may properly enough be called by that name; and therefore this Precept muſt be limited by the plain ſcope and intendment of our Saviour's Diſcourſe; and no Man can argue thus; *ſuch a thing is ſelf-denyal, therefore our Saviour requires it of his Diſciples:* For our Saviour doth not

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here require all kinds of ſelf-denyal; but limits it by his Diſcourſe to one certain kind, beyond which ſelf-denyal is no Duty by virtue of this Text; and therefore for our clearer underſtanding of this Precept of ſelf-denyal, I ſhall do theſe *two* things:

Firſt, Remove ſome ſorts of ſelf-denyal, which are inſtanced in by ſome, as intended in this Precept.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew what kind of ſelf-denyal that is, which our Saviour here intends.

Firſt, There are ſeveral things brought under this Precept of ſelf-denyal, which were never intended by our Saviour. I ſhall inſtance in Two or Three things, which are moſt frequently inſiſted upon, and ſome of them by very devout and well-meaning Men; as, that in matters of Faith, We ſhould deny and renounce our own Senſes and our Reaſon; nay that we ſhould be content to renounce our own Eternal Happineſs, and be willing to be damned for the Glory of God and the Good of our Brethren. But all theſe are ſo apparently and groſly unreaſonable, that it is a Wonder that any one ſhould ever take them for Inſtances of that ſelf-denyal which our Saviour requires; eſpecially

cially conſidering, that in all his Diſcourſe of ſelf-denyal, he does not ſo much as glance at any of theſe inſtances, or any thing like to them. Ser. 12.

1. Some comprehend under ſelf-denyal, the denying and renouncing our own Senſes in matters of Faith. And if this could be made out to be intended by our Saviour in this Precept, we needed not diſpute any of the other Inſtances. For he that renounceth the certainty of Senſe, ſo as not to believe what he ſees, may after this renounce and deny any thing. For the Evidence of Senſe is more clear and unqueſtionable than that of Faith, as the Scripture frequently intimates; as *John* 20. 29. where our Saviour reproves *Thomas*, for refuſing to believe his Reſurrection, upon any leſs Evidence than that of Senſe; *Becauſe thou haſt ſeen, thou haſt believed: Bleſſed are they which have not ſeen, and yet have believed*; which plainly ſuppoſeth the Evidence of Senſe to be the higheſt and cleareſt degree of Evidence. So likewiſe that of St. *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 7. *We walk by Faith, and not by Sight*; Where the Evidence of *Faith*, as that which is more imperfect and obſcure, is oppoſed to that of *Sight*, as more clear and cer-

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tain. So that to believe any Article of Faith, in contradiction to the clear Evidence of Senſe, is contrary to the very Nature of Aſſent, which always yields to the greateſt and cleareſt Evidence.

Beſides that our belief of Religion is *at laſt* reſolved into the certainty of Senſe: ſo that by renouncing *that*, we deſtroy and undermine the very Foundation of our Faith. One of the plaineſt and principal Proofs of the Being of God (which is the firſt and Fundamental Article of all Religion) relies upon the certainty of Senſe, namely, the Frame of this viſible World, by the Contemplation whereof we are led to the acknowledgment of the inviſible Author of it. So St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* 1. 20. That *the inviſible things of God, from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

And the great external Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion, I mean Miracles, is at laſt reſolved into the certainty of Senſe, without which we can have no aſſurance that any Miracle was wrought for the confirmation of it.

And the knowledge likewiſe of the Chriſtian

Chriſtian Faith, is conveyed to us by our Senſes; the Evidence whereof if it be uncertain, takes away all certainty of Faith. *How ſhall they believe*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 10. 14. *How ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not Heard?* And ver. 17. *So then Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* So that to deny and renounce our Senſes in matters of Faith, is to take away the main Pillar and Foundation of it. Ser. 12.

2. Others, almoſt with equal abſurdity, would comprehend under our Saviour's Precept of Self-denyal, the denying and renouncing of our Reaſon in matters of Faith. And this is Self-denyal with a witneſs, for a Man to deny his own reaſon; for it is to deny himſelf to be a Man. This ſurely is a very great miſtake, and tho' the ground of it may be innocent; yet the conſequence of it, and the Diſcourſes upon it, are very abſurd.

The Ground of the miſtake is this. Men think they deny their own Reaſon, when they aſſent to the Revelation of God in ſuch things, as their own Reaſon could neither have diſcovered, nor is able to give the reaſon of:

Vol. 1. whereas in this caſe, a Man is ſo far from denying his own Reaſon, that he does that which is moſt agreeable to it. For what more reaſonable than to believe whatever we are ſufficiently aſſur'd is reveal'd to us by God, who can neither be deceived himſelf, nor deceive us?

But tho' the Ground of this miſtake may be innocent, yet the Conſequences of it are moſt abſurd and dangerous. For if we are to renounce our Reaſon in matters of Faith, then are we bound to believe without Reaſon, which no Man can do; or if he could, then Faith would be unreaſonable, and Infidelity reaſonable. So that this Inſtance likewiſe of Self-denyal, to renounce and deny our own Reaſon, as it is no where expreſt, ſo it cannot reaſonably be thought to be intended by our Saviour in this Precept.

3. Nor doth this Precept of Self-denyal require Men to be content to renounce their own Eternal Happineſs, and to be willing to be Damned for the Glory of God, and the good of their Brethren. If this were the meaning of this Precept, we might juſtly ſay, as the Diſciples did to

to our Saviour, in another Caſe, *This is a hard ſaying, and who can hear it?* The very Thought of this is enough to make Humane Nature to tremble at its very foundation. For the deepeſt Principle that God hath planted in our Nature is *the deſire of our own Preſervation and Happineſs*, and into this the Force of all Laws, and the Reaſon of all our Duty is at laſt reſolved. Ser. 12.

From whence it plainly follows, that it can be no Man's Duty in any caſe to renounce his own Happineſs, and to be content to be for ever Miſerable; becauſe if once this be made a Duty, there will be no Argument left, to perſwade any Man to it. For the moſt powerful Arguments, that God ever uſed, to perſwade Men to any thing, are the promiſe of Eternal Happineſs, and the Terrour of Everlaſting Torments: But if this were a Man's Duty, to be content to be Miſerable for Ever, neither of theſe Arguments would be of force ſufficient to perſwade a Man to it.

The firſt of theſe, namely the Promiſe of Eternal Happineſs, could ſignifie nothing to him that is to be Eter-

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nally Miſerable; becauſe if he be to be ſo, it is impoſſible that he ſhould ever have the benefit of that Promiſe: and the threatning of Eternal Miſery, could be no Argument in this Caſe; becauſe the Duty is juſt as difficult, as the Argument is powerful, and no Man can be moved to ſubmit to any thing that is grievous and terrible, but by ſomething that is more terrible; for if it be not, it is the ſame thing, whether he ſubmit to it, or not; and then no Man can be content, to be Eternally Miſerable, only for the fear of being ſo; for this would be for a Man to run himſelf upon that very inconvenience which he is ſo much afraid of; and 'tis madneſs for a Man to die for fear of death. *Quis novus hic furor eſt, ne moriare, mori?*

By this it plainly appears, how unreaſonable it is to imagin, that by this Precept of Self-denyal, our Saviour ſhould require Men to renounce Everlaſting Happineſs, and to be content to be Miſerable for Ever, upon any account whatſoever; becauſe this were to ſuppoſe, that God hath impoſed that upon us as a Duty, to oblige us whereto there can be no Argument offer'd, that can be powerful enough. A

As for the Glory of God, which is pretended to be the Reason, it is an impossible Supposition; because it cannot be for the Glory of God, to make a Creature for Ever Miserable, that shall not by his Wilful Obstinacy and Impenitence deserve to be so. But this is only cast in to add weight. Ser. 12.

The other Reason of the Good and Salvation of our Brethren, is the only Consideration for which there is any manner of colour from Scripture; and two Instances are alleged to this purpose, of two very Excellent Persons, that seem to have desired this, and to have submitted to it; and therefore it is not so unreasonable as we would make it, that our Saviour should enjoyn it as a Duty. The Instances alleged are these. *Moses* desired of God that he might be blotted out of the Book of Life, rather than the People of *Israel*, whom he had Conducted and Governed so long, should be destroyed: And in the New Testament St. *Paul* tells us, That *he could wish, that himself were accursed from Christ, for his Brethren*; so earnest a desire had he of their Salvation.

But

Vol. I. But neither of these Instances are of force sufficient to overthrow the Reasons of my former Discourse; for the desire of *Moses* amounts only to a submission to a Temporal death, that his Nation might be saved from a Temporal ruin. For the Expression of *blotting out of the Book of Life*, is of the same importance with those Phrases so frequently used in the Old Testament, of *blotting out from the face of the Earth*, and *blotting out one's name from under Heaven*, which signifie no more than Temporal death and destruction; and then *Moses*'s Wish was reasonable and generous, and signifies no more, but that he was willing, if God pleased, to die to save the Nation.

As for St. *Paul*'s Wish, of *being accursed from Christ*, it is plainly an Hyperbolical Expression of his great Affection to his Country-men the *Jews*, and his Zeal for their Salvation, which was so great, that if it had been a thing reasonable and lawful, he could have wisht the greatest Evil to himself for their sakes; and therefore it is observable, that it is not a positive and absolute wish, but expresst in the usual form of

of uſhering in an Hyperbole; *I could wiſh*, juſt as we are wont to ſay, when we would expreſs a thing to the height, which is not fit, nor intended to be done by us, *I could wiſh ſo or ſo; I could even afford to do this or that*; which kind of ſpeeches, no Man takes for a ſtrict and preciſe Declaration of our minds, but for a figurative expreſſion of a great Paſſion.

And thus I have done with the *firſt* thing I propoſed for the Explication of this Precept, or Duty of Self-denial, which was to remove ſome ſorts of Self-denial, which by ſome are frequently inſtanced in, as intended by our Saviour in this Precept. I proceed now to the

Second thing I propoſed, which is to declare poſitively, what that Self-denial is, which our Saviour here intends; and 'tis plainly this, and nothing but this; that we ſhould be willing to part with all Earthly Comforts and Conveniences, to quit all our Temporal Intereſts and Enjoyments, and even Life it ſelf, for the ſake of Chriſt and his Religion; this our Saviour means, by *denying our ſelves*: and then (which is much the ſame with the other) that we ſhould be

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be willing to bear any Temporal inconvenience and ſuffering, upon the ſame account; this is *to take up our Croſs and follow him.*

And that this is the full meaning of theſe two Phraſes; of *denying our ſelves*, and *taking up our Croſs*, will clearly appear, by conſidering the particular Inſtances, which our Saviour gives of this Self-denyal, whenever he hath occaſion to ſpeak of it, by which you will plainly ſee, that theſe expreſſions amount to no more than I have ſaid. Even here in the *Text*, after our Saviour had told his Diſciples, that *he that would come after him, muſt deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs*; It follows immediately, *For whoſoever will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever will loſe his life for my ſake, ſhall find it.* You ſee here, that he inſtanceth in parting with our lives for him, as the higheſt piece of Self-denyal, which he requires. And he himſelf elſewhere tells us, that *greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend.* Elſewhere he inſtanceth in quitting our neareſt Relations for his ſake, *Luke* 14. 26, 27. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children,*

children, and brethren, and ſiſters, yea and his own life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple; and whoſoever doth not bear his Croſs and come after me, he cannot be my Diſciple. Ser. 12.

Which expreſſions, of *hating Father, and Mother, and other Relations, and even Life it ſelf*, are not to be underſtood Rigorouſly, and in an abſolute Senſe, but Comparatively; for it is an *Hebrew* manner of ſpeech, to expreſs that Abſolutely, which is meant only Comparatively; and ſo our Saviour explains himſelf, in a parallel *Text* to this, *Math.* 10. 37, 38. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; he that loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; And he that taketh not his Croſs, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* In another place, our Saviour inſtanceth in quitting our Eſtates for his ſake, *Matth.* 19. 29. *Every one that ſhall forſake houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my names ſake*; by all which it appears, that this Self-denyal which our Saviour here requires of his Diſciples, is to be extended no farther, than to a readineſs and willingneſs, whenever God ſhall call us

to

Vol. I. to it, to quit all our Temporal Interests and Enjoyments, and even Life it self, the dearest of all other, and to submit to any Temporal inconvenience and suffering for his sake. And thus much for the Explication of the Precept here in the *Text*. I proceed in the

III. Place, to consider the strict and indispensable Obligation of this Precept of Self-denyal, and suffering for Christ and his Truth, rather than to forsake and renounce them. *If any Man will come after me*, or *be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me*; that is, upon these Terms he must be my Disciple, in this manner he must follow me; and in the *Text* I mention'd before, he declares again, that he that is not ready to quit all his Relations and even Life it self, for his sake, *is not worthy of him*, and *cannot be his Disciple*; and *whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple*; so that we cannot be the Disciples of Christ, nor be worthy to be called by his Name, if we be not ready thus to deny our selves for his sake: And not only so; but if for fear of the Cross, or of any temporal sufferings, we

we ſhould renounce and deny him; he threatens *to deny us before his Father which is in Heaven, (i. e.)* to deprive us of Eternal Life, and to Sentence us to Everlaſting Miſery, *Matth.* 10. 32. *Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs before my father which is in Heaven: But whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my father which is in Heaven*; and *Mark* 8. 38. *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels*; that is, when he cometh to Judge the World, they ſhall not be able to ſtand in that Judgment; for that by his *being aſhamed of them*, is meant, that they ſhall be condemned by him, is plain from what goes before, V. 26, 27. *What ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?* and then it follows, *Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words.* Ser. 12.

But becauſe ſome have had the Confidence to tell the World, that our Saviour doth not require thus much of

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of Christians; but all that he obligeth us to, is to believe in him in our Hearts, but not to make any outward Profession of his Religion, when the Magistrate forbids it, and we are in danger of suffering for it; I shall therefore briefly examine what is pretended for so strange an Assertion, and so directly contrary to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, and to the express Words of our Saviour.

The Author of the Book called the *Leviathan* tells us, That we are not only not bound to confess Christ, but we are obliged to deny him, in case the Magistrate require us so to do. His Words are these; *What if the Soveraign forbid us to believe in Christ?* He answers, *Such forbidding is of no effect, because Belief and Unbelief never follow Mens Commands. But what* (says he) *if we be commanded by our lawful Prince to say with our Tongues, we believe not; must we obey such Commands?* To this he answers, *That Profession with the Tongue is but an External thing, and no more than any other Gesture, whereby we signifie our Obedience, and wherein a Christian, holding firmly in his Heart the Faith of Christ, hath the same Liberty which the Prophet* Elisha *allowed to* Naaman. *But what then* (says he) *shall I answer*

answer to our Saviour, saying, Whosoever denieth me before Men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven? His Answer is, *This we may say, that whatsoever a Subject is compell'd to in obedience to his Soveraign, and does it not in order to his own Mind, but the Law of his Country, the Action is not his, but his Soveraign's; nor is it he that in this case denies Christ before Men, but his Governour, and the Laws of his Country.* Ser. 12.

But can any Man, that in good earnest pays any degree of Reverence to our Blessed Saviour and his Religion, think to baffle such plain Words by so frivolous an answer? There is no Man doubts, but if the Magistrate should command Men to deny Christ, he would be guilty of a great Sin in so doing: but if *we must obey God rather than Men,* and every Man must *give an account of himself to God*; how will this excuse him that denies Christ, or breaks any other Commandment of God, upon the Command of the Magistrate? And to put the matter out of all doubt, that our Saviour forbids all that will be his Disciples, upon pain of Damnation, to deny him, tho' the Magistrate should com-

Vol. I. mand them to do ſo, it is very obſervable, that in that very place, where he ſpeaks of confeſſing or denying him before Men, he puts this very Caſe of their being brought before Kings and Governours for confeſſing him, *Matth.* 10. 17. *Beware* (ſays he) *of Men, for they will deliver you up to the Councils, and they will ſcourge you in their Synagogues; and ye ſhall be brought before Governours and Kings for my ſake, for a teſtimony againſt them and the Gentiles.* But what Teſtimony would this be againſt them, if Chriſtians were bound to deny Chriſt at their Command? But our Saviour goes on, and tells them how they ought to demean themſelves, when they were brought before Kings and Governours, *v.* 19. *But when they ſhall deliver you up, take ye no thought how, or what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it ſhall be given you in that very hour what ye ſhall ſpeak.* But what need of any ſuch extraordinary Aſſiſtance in the caſe, if they had nothing to do, but to deny him, when they were required by the Magiſtrate to do it? And then (proceeding in the ſame Diſcourſe) he bids them, *v.* 28. *Not to fear them that can kill the Body, and*

and after that have no more that they can do; that is, not to deny him, for fear of any Temporal Punishment or Suffering the Magistrate could inflict upon them; *but to fear* and obey *him, who can destroy Body and Soul in Hell.* And upon this Discourse our Saviour concludes. *v.* 32, 33. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* And now can any thing be plainer, than that our Saviour requires his Disciples to make Confession of him before Kings and Governours, and not to deny him for fear of any thing which they can do to them? But let us enquire a little farther, and see how the Apostles, who received this Precept from our Saviour himself, did understand it. *Acts* 4. 14. we find *Peter* and *John* summoned before the Jewish Magistrates, who *strictly commanded them, not to speak at all, nor teach in the Name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.* And when they still persisted in their Ser. 12.

Vol. I. courſe, notwithſtanding the Command of the Magiſtrate, and were called again before the Council, *Ch.* 5. 28. and *The High Prieſt asked them, ſaying, Did we not ſtraitly command you, that you ſhould not teach in this Name? and behold ye have filled Jeruſalem with your Doctrine*; They return them again the ſame Anſwer, *v.* 29. *Then Peter and the other Apoſtles anſwered and ſaid, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

And let any Man now judge, whether our Saviour did not oblige Men to confeſs him even before Magiſtrates, and to obey him rather than Men. And indeed, how can any Man in reaſon think, that the great King and Governour of the World ſhould inveſt any Man with a Power to controul his Authority, and to oblige Men to diſobey and renounce him, *by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree judgment*? This is a thing ſo unreaſonable, that it can hardly be imagined, that any thing but down-right Malice againſt God and Religion could prompt any Man to advance ſuch an Aſſertion.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the *Fourth* and *Laſt* Particular, which I propoſed

propoſed to ſpeak to; namely, to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this Precept of Self-denial and Suffering for Chriſt, which at firſt Appearance may ſeem to be ſo very harſh and difficult. But this, together with the Application of this Diſcourſe, ſhall be reſerved to another Oportunity. Ser. 12.

SERMON XIII.

Of Self-denyal and Suffering for Christ's ſake.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

MATTH. XVI. 24.

Then ſaid Jeſus unto his Diſciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow me.

THEN *ſaid Jeſus to his Diſciples*, that is, upon Occaſion of his former Diſcourſe with them, concerning his approaching Paſſion, and that he muſt ſhortly go up to *Jeruſalem*, and there ſuffer many things of the Elders and Chief Prieſts and Scribes, and at laſt be put to Death by them; *Then ſaid Jeſus unto his Diſciples, If any man will come after me*; that is, If any Man will be

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my Diſciple, and undertake the Profeſſion of my Religion, he muſt do it upon theſe Terms of Self-denial and Suffering.

In the handling of theſe Words, I proceeded in this Method.

Firſt, I conſidered the way which our Saviour here uſeth in making Proſelytes, and gaining Men over to his Religion. He offers no manner of Force and Violence to compel Men to the Profeſſion of it; but fairly propoſeth it to their Conſideration and Choice, telling them plainly upon what Terms they muſt be his Diſciples; if they like them, and be reſolved to ſubmit to them, well; if not, 'tis in vain to follow him any longer; for *they cannot be his Diſciples.* And to uſe any other way than this to gain men over to Religion, is contrary both to the Nature of Man, who is a Reaſonable Creature; and to the Nature of Religion, which, if it be not our Free Choice, cannot be Religion.

Secondly, I explained this Duty or Precept of Self-denial, expreſs'd in theſe Words, *Let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs*; which Phraſe, of *taking up one's Croſs*, is an Alluſion to the *Roman* Cuſtom, which was, That the Malefactor

that

that was to be Crucified, was to take up his Cross upon his Shoulders, and to carry it to the Place of Execution. Ser. 13.

Now for our clearer understanding of this Precept of Self-denyal, I told you, that it is not to be extented to every thing that may properly be call'd by that Name, but to be limited by the plain Scope and Intendment of our Saviour's Discourse; and therefore I did in the

First Place remove several things which are instanced in by some, as intended and required by this Precept. As,

1. That we should deny and renounce our own Sense in matters of Faith. But this I shewed to be absurd and impossible; because if we do not believe what we see, or will believe contrary to what we see, we destroy all Certainty; there being no greater than that of Sense. Besides, that the Evidence of Faith being less clear and certain than that of Sense, it is contrary to the Nature of Assent, which is always sway'd and born down by the greatest and cleerest Evidence. So that we cannot assent to any thing in plain Contradiction to the Evidence of Sense.

2. Others

2. Others would comprehend under this Precept, the denying of our Reaſon in matters of Faith; which is in the next degree of Abſurdity to the other; becauſe no Man can believe any thing, but upon ſome Reaſon or other; and to believe without any Reaſon, or againſt Reaſon, is to make Faith unreaſonable, and Infidelity reaſonable.

3. Others pretend, that by virtue of this Precept, Men ought to be content to renounce their own Eternal Happineſs, and to be Miſerable for Ever, for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their Brethren. But this I ſhewed cannot be a Duty, for this plain Reaſon; becauſe if it were, there is no Argument left powerful enough to perſwade a Man to it. And as for the two Scripture Inſtances alledged to this purpoſe; *Moſes* his Wiſh, of being *blotted out of the Book of Life* for the People of *Iſrael*, ſignifies no more than a Temporal Death; and St. *Paul*'s, of being *accurſed from Chriſt for his Brethren*, is only an hyperbolical Expreſſion of his great Paſſion and Zeal for the Salvation of his Country-men; as is evident from the Form of the Expreſſion, ſuch as is commonly uſed to uſher in an Hyperbole; *I could wiſh*. And in the *Second*

Second Place, I shewed positively, That the plain meaning of this Precept of Self-denial is this, and nothing but this; That we should be willing to part with all our Temporal Interests and Enjoyments, and even Life it self, for the sake of Christ and his Religion. This is *to deny our selves.* And then, that we should be willing to bear any temporal Inconvenience and Suffering upon the same Account. This is *to take up our Cross.* And this I shewed from the Instances which our Saviour gives of Self-denial, whenever he had occasion to discourse of it. Ser. 13.

Thirdly, I considered the strict and indispensable Obligation of this Precept of Self-denial, rather than to forsake Christ and his Religion. Without this Disposition and Resolution of Mind we *cannot be his Disciples*; and *if we deny him before Men; he will also deny us before his Father which is in Heaven.* And this Confession of Him and his Truth we are to make before Kings and Governours, and notwithstanding their Commands to the contrary, which are of no Force against the Laws and Commands of God.

Thus far I have gone. There remains only the

Fourth

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Fourth and *Laſt* Particular, which I propoſed to ſpeak to; *viz.* To vindicate the Reaſonableneſs of this Self-denial and Suffering for Chriſt, which at firſt appearance may ſeem to be ſo very difficult. And this Precept cannot be thought unreaſonable, if we take into Conſideration theſe *Three* Things.

I. That He, who requires this of us, hath Himſelf given us the greateſt Example of Self-denial that ever was. The greateſt in it ſelf, in that he denied himſelf more, and ſuffered more grievous things, than it is poſſible for any of us to do: And ſuch an Example as, in the Circumſtances of it, is moſt apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; becauſe all his Self-denial and Sufferings were for our ſakes.

II. If we conſider, That he hath promiſed all needful Supplies of his Grace, to enable us to the Diſcharge of this difficult Duty of Self-denial and Suffering, and to ſupport and comfort us therein.

III. He hath aſſured us of a Glorious Reward of all our Sufferings and Self-denial, beyond the Proportion of them, both in the Degree and Duration of it. I ſhall go over theſe as briefly as I can.

I. If

Ser. 13.

I. If we consider, That He, who requires us thus to deny our selves for him, hath given us the greatest Example of Self-denyal that ever was. Our Saviour knowing how unwelcome this Doctrine of Self-denyal and Suffering must needs be to his Disciples, and how hardly this Precept would go down with them, to sweeten it a little, and take off the harshness of it, and to prepare their minds the better for it, he tells them first of his own Sufferings, that by that means he might, in some measure, reconcile their Minds to it, when they saw that he required nothing of them, but what he was ready to undergo Himself, and to give them the Example of it. And upon this Occasion it was, that our Saviour acquaints them with the hard and difficult Terms upon which they must be his Disciples: *V.* 21. The Evangelist tells us, that *Jesus began to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders, and Chief-Priests, and Scribes, and be killed. Then said Jesus unto his Disciples*, that is, immediately upon this Discourse of his own Sufferings, as the fittest time for it, he takes the Oportunity to tell them plainly

Vol. I. plainly of their own Sufferings, and that unless they were prepared and resolved to deny themselves so far, as to suffer all manner of Persecution for his sake and the Profession of his Religion, they could not be his Disciples. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me,* that is, let him reckon and resolve upon following that Example of Self-denyal and Suffering, in which I will go before him. Now the Consideration of this Example of Self-denyal and Suffering, which our Saviour hath given us, hath great force in it to reconcile us to this difficult Duty, and to shew the Reasonableness of it.

1. In that He, who requires us thus to deny our selves, hath Himself in his own Person, given us the greatest Example of self-denyal that ever was. And,

2. Such an an Example as, in all the Circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his Self-denyal and Sufferings were for our sakes.

1. He, who requires us thus to deny our selves, hath Himself in his own Person given us the greatest Example of Self-

Self-denyal that ever was; in that he denyed himself more, and suffered more grievous things, than any of us can do. He bore the insupportable Load of all the Sins of all Mankind, and of the Wrath and Vengeance due to them. *Never was sorrow like to his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; his visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men.* (*i. e.*) He underwent more Affliction, and had more Contempt poured upon him, than ever was upon any of the Sons of Men: and yet he endured all this with incredible Patience and Meekness, with the greatest Evenness and Constancy of Mind, and with the most perfect Submission and Resignation of himself to the Will of God, that can be imagined. Ser. 13.

Such an Example as this should be of great force to animate us with the like Courage and Resolution, in lesser Dangers and Difficulties. To see *the Captain of our Salvation* going before us, and leading us on so bravely, and *made perfect by* greater *sufferings* than we can ever be called to, or are any ways able

to

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to undergo, is no ſmall Argument and Encouragement to us, to *take up our Croſs and follow him.* The Conſideration of the unknown Sufferings of the Son of God, ſo great as we cannot well conceive of them, ſhould make all the Afflictions and Sufferings that can befall us, not only tolerable, but eaſie to us. Upon this Conſideration it is, that the Apoſtle animates Chriſtians to Patience in their Chriſtian Courſe, notwithſtanding all the Hardſhips and Sufferings that attended it, *Heb.* 12. 2. *Let us run with patience the race which is ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the Shame. For conſider him, who endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf, leſt ye alſo be weary and faint in your minds.*

And this Example is more Powerful for our Encouragement, becauſe therein we ſee the World conquered to our Hands, and all the Terrors and Temptations of it baffled and ſubdued, and thereby a cheap and eaſie Victory over it obtained for us. By this Conſideration, our Saviour endeavours to inſpire his Diſciples with Chearfulneſs and Courage in this great Conflict,

John

John 16. 33. *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good chear, I have overcome the world.* Ser. 13.

2. This Example of our Saviour is such as, in all the circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the Imitation of it; because all his Self-denial and Sufferings were for our sakes, in Pity and Kindness to us, and wholly for our Benefit and Advantage. We are apt to have their Example in great regard, from whom we have received great Kindness and mighty Benefits. This Pattern of Self-denyal and Suffering, which our Religion proposeth to us, is the Example of One, whom we have Reason to Esteem, and Love, and Imitate, above any Person in the World. 'Tis the Example of our Lord and Master, of our Soveraign and our Saviour, of the Founder of our Religion, and of *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*: And surely such an Example must needs carry Authority with it, and command our Imitation. 'Tis the Example of our best Friend, and greatest Benefactor; of Him, who laid down his Life for us, and sealed his Love to us with his dearest Blood, and, even when we were bitter Enemies to

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him, did, and ſuffered more for us, than any Man ever did for his beſt Friend. If we ſhould be reduced to Poverty and Want; let us conſider Him, *who being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* If it ſhould be our lot to *be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake*, and exerciſed with Sufferings and Reproaches; Let us *look unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who endured the Croſs and deſpiſed the ſhame* for our ſakes. In a Word, can we be diſcontented at any Condition, or decline it in a good Cauſe; when we conſider how Contented the Son of God was, in the meaneſt and moſt deſtitute; how Meek and Patient in the moſt afflicted and ſuffering Condition; how he welcomed all Events, and was ſo perfectly reſigned to the Will of his Heavenly Father, that whatever pleaſed God, pleaſed him?

And ſurely in no Caſe is Example more neceſſary than in this, to engage and encourage us in the diſcharge of ſo difficult a Duty, ſo contrary to the bent and inclination of Fleſh and Blood. A bare Precept of Self-denial, and a peremptory

emptory Command to ſacrifice our own Wills, our Eaſe, our Pleaſure, our Reputation, yea and Life it ſelf, to the Glory of God, and the Maintenance of his Truth, would have ſounded very harſh and ſevere, had not the Practice of all this been mollified and ſweetned by a Pattern of ſo much advantage; by One who in all theſe reſpects denied himſelf, much more than it is poſſible for us to do; by One who might have inſiſted upon a greater Right, who abaſed himſelf, and ſtooped from a greater Height and Dignity; who was not forced into a condition of Meanneſs and Poverty, but choſe it for our ſakes; who ſubmitted to Suffering, tho he had never deſerved it. Here is an Example that hath all the Argument, and all the Encouragement that can be, to the imitation of it. Ser. 13.

Such an Example is of greater force and authority than any Precept or Law can be; So that well might our Lord, thus going before us, command us to follow him, and ſay, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs and follow me.* For if He thus denied himſelf, well may We, who have much leſs to deny, but much

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more Cause and Reason to do it. He did it voluntarily, and of choice; but it is our Duty. He did it for our sakes; we do it for our own. His own Goodness moved him to deny himself for us; but gratitude obligeth us to deny our selves in any thing for him. We did not in the least deserve any thing from him; but he hath wholly merited all this, and infinitely more from us. So that such an Example as this is, in all the Circumstances of it, cannot but be very powerful and effectual to oblige us to the Imitation of it. But the Reasonableness of this Precept will yet farther appear, if we consider in the

Third place, That God hath promised to all Sincere Christians all needful Supplies of his Grace, to enable them to the discharge of this difficult Duty of Self-denial, and to support and comfor them therein. For the Spirit of Christ dwells in Christians, and the same Glorious Power that raised up *Jesus* from the Dead, works mightily in them that believe; *Eph.* 1. 19. *That ye may know* (saith St. *Paul*, speaking in general to all Christians) *what is the exceeding greatness of his Power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty*

mighty Power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the Dead. Of our selves we are very weak, and the Temptations and Terrors of the World very powerful; but there is a Principle residing in every true Christian, able to bear us up against the World, and the power of all its Temptations. *Whatsoever is born of God* (saith St. *John*) *overcometh the World; and this is the victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Ser. 13.

And this Grace and Strength was afforded to the first Christians in a most Extraordinary manner, for their Comfort and support under Sufferings; So that they were *strengthned with all Might, according to God's glorious Power, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness*, as St. *Paul* prays for the *Colossians*, Ch. 1. 11. And these *Consolations of the Spirit* of God, this *Joy in the Holy Ghost*, was not peculiarly appropriated to the first times of Christianity; but is still afforded to all sincere Christians, in such degree as is necessary, and convenient for them. And whenever God exerciseth Good Men with tryals more than

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humane, and ſuch Sufferings as are beyond the ordinary rate of humane Strength and Patience to bear, he hath promiſed to endue them with more than humane Courage and Reſolution. So St. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. *He is faithful that hath promiſed, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And why ſhould we be daunted at any Suffering; if God be pleaſed to encreaſe our Strength, in proportion to the Sharpneſs of our Sufferings?

And Bleſſed be God, many of our perſecuted Brethren at this day have remarkably found this comfortable Aſſiſtance and Support; tho many likewiſe have fallen through fear and weakneſs; as it alſo happen'd in the Primitive times. But where ever this Promiſe is not made good, it is (as I have formerly ſaid) by reaſon of ſome Fault and Failing on our part. Either Men were not Sincere in the profeſſion of the Truth, and then no wonder, if *when Tribulation and Perſecution ariſeth, becauſe of the Word, they are offended and fall off.* Or elſe they were too Confident of themſelves,

ſelves, and did not ſeek God's Grace and Aſſiſtance, and rely upon it as they ought; and thereupon God hath left them to themſelves (as he did *Peter*) to convince them of their own Frailty and raſh Confidence; and yet even in that caſe, when there is Truth and Sincerity at the bottom, there is no Reaſon to doubt, but that the Goodneſs of God is ſuch, as by ſome means or other to give to ſuch perſons (as he did to *Peter*) the oportunity of recovering themſelves by Repentance, and a more ſtedfaſt Reſolution afterwards. Ser. 13.

Fourthly, If we conſider in the *laſt* place, that our Saviour hath aſſured us of a Glorious and Eternal Reward of all our Self-denial and Sufferings for him; a Reward Infinitely beyond the proportion of our Sufferings, both in the Degree and Duration of it. Now the clear diſcovery of this is peculiarly owing to the Chriſtian Religion, and *the appearace of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light by the Goſpel.*

And as our Bleſſed Saviour hath aſſured us of this Bleſſed State of Good

Vol. I. Men in another World; ſo hath he likewiſe aſſur'd us, that greater Degrees of this Happineſs ſhall be the Portion of thoſe who ſuffer for Him and his Truth, *Mat.* 5. 10, 11, 12. *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt you falſly, for my Names ſake. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven.* And nothing ſurely can be more Reaſonable, than to part with things of Small Value, for things infinitely Greater and more Conſiderable; to forgo the Tranſient Pleaſures and Enjoyments, and the Imperfect Felicities of this World, for the Solid, and Perfect, and Perpetual Happineſs of a Better Life; and to exchange a Short and Miſerable Life, for Eternal Life and Bleſſedneſs; in a word, to be content to be driven Home, to be baniſht out of this World into our own Native Country, and to be violently thruſt out of this *Vale of Tears*, into thoſe Regions of Bliſs, where are *Joys unſpeakable and full of Glory*.

This Conſideration St. *Paul* tells us ſupported the Primitive Chriſtians, under

der their ſharpeſt and heavieſt Sufferings, 2 *Cor.* 4. 16. *For this cauſe* (ſays he) *we faint not, becauſe our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilſt we look not at the things which are ſeen, but the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.* So that our Sufferings bear no more Proportion to the Reward of them, than Finite does to Infinite, than Temporal to Eternal, between which there is no Proportion. Ser. 13.

All that now remains, is to draw ſome uſeful Inferences from what hath been Diſcourſed, concerning this great and difficult Duty of Self-denial for the ſake of Chriſt and his Religion; and they ſhall be theſe following.

I. To acknowledge the great Goodneſs of God to us, that all theſe Laws and Commands, even the Hardeſt and Severeſt of them, are ſo reaſonable.

God, as he is our Maker and gave us our Beings, hath an Entire and Soveraign Right over us, and by virtue of that Right, might have impoſed very Hard things upon us, and this without the giving

Vol. I. giving Account to us of any of his matters, and without propounding any Reward to us, ſo vaſtly diſproportionable to our Obedience to him. But in giving Laws to us, he hath not made uſe of this Right. The moſt Severe and Rigorous Commands of the Goſpel are ſuch, that we ſhall be infinitely Gainers by our Obedience to them. If we deny our ſelves any thing in this world for Chriſt and his Religion, we ſhall, in the next, be conſidered for it to the Utmoſt, not only far beyond what it can Deſerve, but beyond what we can Conceive or Imagine; for this periſhing Life, and the tranſitory Trifles and Enjoyments of it, we ſhall receive *a Kingdom which cannot be ſhaken, an uncorruptible Crown which fadeth not away, Eternal in the Heavens.* For theſe are *Faithful Sayings*, and we ſhall infallibly find them true, *That if we ſuffer with Chriſt, we ſhall alſo reign with him; if we be perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, great ſhall be our reward in Heaven*; if we part with our Temporal Life, we ſhall be made Partakers of Eternal Life. He that is firmly perſuaded of the Happineſs of the next World, and believes *the Glory which ſhall then be revealed*, hath no Reaſon

Reaſon to be ſo much offended at the Sufferings of this Preſent time, ſo long as he knows and believes, that *theſe Light afflictions, which are but for a Moment, will work for him a far more Exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory.* Ser. 13.

II. Seeing this is required of every Chriſtian, to be always in a Preparation and Diſpoſition of Mind to deny our ſelves, and to take up our Croſs; if we do in good earneſt reſolve to be Chriſtians, we ought to ſit down and conſider well with our ſelves, what our Religion will coſt us, and whether we be content to come up to the Price of it. If we value any thing in this World above Chriſt and his Truth, *we are not worthy of him.* If it come to this, that we muſt either renounce him and his Religion, or quit our Temporal Intereſts; if we be not ready to forego theſe, nay, and to part even with Life it ſelf, rather than to forſake Him and his Truth; *we are not worthy of him.* Theſe are the Terms of our Chriſtianity, and therefore we are required in Baptiſm ſolemnly to renounce the World: And our Saviour, from this very Conſideration, infers, That all who take upon them the Profeſſion of his Religion, ſhould conſider

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consider seriously beforehand, and count the cost of it, *Luke* 14. 28. *Which of you,* (says he) *intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Or what King going to war with another King, doth not sit down and consult, whether with* 10000 *he be able to meet him that cometh against him with* 20000. *So likewise, whosoever he be that forsaketh not all he hath, cannot be my Disciple.* You see the Terms upon which we are Christians; we must always be prepared in the Resolution of our Minds, to deny our selves, and take up our Cross, tho' we are not actually put upon this Tryal.

III. What hath been said is matter of great Comfort and Encouragement to all those who deny themselves, and suffer upon so good an Account; of whom, God knows, there are too great a Number at this Day, in several parts of the World; Some under actual Sufferings, such as cannot but move Compassion and Horror in all that hear of them; Others who are fled hither, and into other Countries, for Refuge and Shelter from one of the sharpest Persecutions that perhaps ever was, if all the Circumstances

ſtances of it be duly conſidered. But not to enlarge upon ſo unpleaſant a Theam, they who ſuffer for the Truth and Righteouſneſs ſake, have all the Comfort and Encouragement, that the beſt Example, and the greateſt and moſt glorious Promiſes of God can give. They have the beſt Example in their view, *Jeſus, the Author and Finiſher of their Faith, who endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the Shame.* So that how great and terrible ſoever their Sufferings be, they do but tread in the Steps of the Son of God, and of the beſt and holieſt Man that ever was; and He, who is their great Example in Suffering, will likewiſe be their Support, and *their exceeding great Reward.*

So that tho Suffering for Chriſt be accounted great Self-denial, and he is graciouſly pleaſed ſo to accept it, becauſe in denying things Preſent and Senſible, for things Future and Inviſible, we do not only declare our Affection to him, but our great Faith and Confidence in him, by ſhewing that we rely upon his Word, and venture all upon the Security which he offers us in another World; yet according to a right Eſtimate of things, and to thoſe who

walk

Vol. I. *walk by Faith and not by Sight*, this which we call Self-denyal, is, in truth and reality, but a more commendable ſort of Self-love, becauſe we do herein moſt effectually conſult, and ſecure, and advance our own Happineſs.

IV. And *Laſtly*, Since God hath been pleaſed for ſo long a time to excuſe us from this hardeſt part of Self-denyal, let us not grudge to deny our ſelves in leſſer Matters, for the ſake of his Truth and Religion; to miſs a good Place, or to quit it upon that account; much leſs let us think much to renounce our Vices, and to thwart our evil Inclinations for his ſake. As *Naaman*'s Servant ſaid to him, concerning the means preſcribed by the Prophet for his Cure, *If he had bid thee do ſome Great thing, wouldeſt thou not have done it? How much more, when he hath only ſaid, Waſh and be clean?* So ſince God impoſeth no harder Terms upon us, than Repentance and Reformation of our Lives, we ſhould readily and thankfully ſubmit to them.

This, I know, is difficult to ſome, to *mortifie their earthly Members*, to *crucifie the fleſh, with the affections and luſts of it*; 'tis like *cutting off a right Hand, and plucking out a right Eye.* Some

Some are ſo ſtrongly addicted to their Luſts and Vices, that they could with more eaſe deſpiſe Life, in many caſes, than thus Deny themſelves. But in Truth, there is no more of Self-denial in it, than a Man denies himſelf when he is mortally Sick and Wounded, in being content to be Cured, and willing to be Well. This is not at all to our Temporal Prejudice and Inconvenience, and it directly conduceth to our Eternal Happineſs; for there is no Man that lives a holy and virtuous Life, and in Obedience to the Laws of God, that can lightly receive any Prejudice by it in this World. Since God doth not call us to Suffer, we ſhould Do ſo much the more for him. Since he doth not put us to teſtifie our Love to him, by laying down our Lives for him, we ſhould ſhew it by a greater Care to keep his Commandments. Ser. 13.

God was pleaſed to exerciſe the firſt Chriſtians with great Sufferings, and to try their Love and Conſtancy to him and his Truth, in a very Extraordinary manner, by Severity and Contempt, by *the ſpoiling of their Goods*, and *the loſs of all things*; *by bonds and impriſonments*; *by cruel mockings and ſcourgings*; by

by the extremity of torments, and by *resisting even unto blood*; by *being kill'd for his sake all the day long, and appointed as Sheep for the slaughter*. God was pleased to make their way to Heaven very sharp and painful, and to *hedge it in* as it were *with thorns on every side*, so that they could not, but *through many tribulations, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*.

Thus we ought all to be in a Readiness and Resolution to submit to this Duty, if God should think fit at any time of our Lives to call us to it. But if he be pleased to excuse us from it, and *to let this Cup pass from us*, (which may lawfully be our earnest Prayer to God, since we have so good a Pattern for it) there will be another Duty incumbent upon us, which will take up the whole Man, and the whole time of our Life, and that is *to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives*.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

PREACHED

At *Whitehall*, before the Family,

Nov. 1. 1686.

Good Men Strangers and Sojourners upon Earth.

The First Sermon on this Text.

HEB. XI. 13.

And confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth.

The whole Verſe runs thus;

Theſe all died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth.

THE Apoſtle having declared at the latter end of the foregoing Chapter, that Faith is the great principle whereby Good Men are acted,

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and whereby they are ſupported under all the Evils and Sufferings of this Life, Verſe 38. *Now the Juſt ſhall live by Faith*; in this Chapter he makes it his main buſineſs, to ſet forth to us at large the Force and Power of Faith; and to this Purpoſe, he firſt tells us what kind of Faith he means; *viz.* a firm Perſuaſion of things not Preſent and Viſible to Senſe, but Inviſible and Future; Ver. 1. *Now Faith* (ſaith he) *is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen.* Faith Repreſents to us the Reality of things which are Inviſible to Senſe, as the Exiſtence of God and his Providence; and of things which are at a great diſtance from us, as the Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments in another World.

And then he proceeds to ſhew, by particular and famous Inſtances, that the firm Belief and Perſuaſion of theſe things, was the great Principle of the Piety and Virtue of the Saints and of Good Men in all Ages of the World; by this *Abel* and *Enoch* and *Noah*; *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*; *Joſeph* and *Moſes*, and all the Famous Heroes of the Old Teſtamrnt *obtained a good*

good Report, and *pleaſed God*, and did all thoſe eminent Acts of Obedience and Self-denyal which are recorded of them. They *believed the Being of God, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* They dreaded his Threatnings, and relyed upon his Promiſes of Future and Inviſible Good things. They lived and died in a full Perſuaſion and Confidence of the Truth of them; tho' they did not live to ſee them actually fulfilled and accompliſht. *All theſe* (ſaith he, ſpeaking of thoſe Eminent Saints which he had inſtanced in before) *all theſe died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them.* This is ſpoken with a more particular regard to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, to whom the Promiſes of the Conqueſt and Poſſeſſion of a Fruitful Land were made, and of a Numerous Offspring, among whom ſhould be the Meſſias, in whom all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed. Ser. 14.

Theſe Promiſes they did not live to ſee accompliſht and made good in their Days; but they heartily believed them, and rejoiced in the Hope and Expectation of them, as if they had embraced

Vol. 1. them in their Arms, and been put into the actual Poſſeſſion of them: *And they confeſſed, that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth.*

This Saying and Acknowledgment more particularly and immediately refers to thoſe Sayings of the Patriarchs *Abraham* and *Jacob*, which we find recorded, *Gen.* 23. 4. where *Abraham* ſays to the Sons of *Heth*, *I am a Stranger and a Sojourner with you*; And *Gen.* 47. 9. where *Jacob* ſays to *Pharaoh*, *The days of the years of my Pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my Life been.* Theſe good Men were *Strangers and Sojourners* in a Land, which was promiſed to be theirs afterwards. They dwelt in it themſelves as *Strangers*, but were in expectation that it would one day become the Inheritance of their Poſterity.

Now in this, as by a Type and Shadow, the Apoſtle repreſents to us the Condition of Good Men, while they are paſſing through this World. They are *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*; they travel up and down the World for a time, as the Patriarchs did in the Land

Land of *Canaan*; but are in expectation of a better and more ſettled Condition hereafter; *they deſire a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*, ſays the Apoſtle at the 16 *verſ.* of this Chapter. Ser. 14.

That which I deſign from theſe words is to repreſent to us our Preſent Condition in this World, and to awaken us to a due Senſe and ſerious Conſideration of it. It is the ſame Condition, that all the Saints and Holy Men that are gone before us were in, in this World, and every one of us may ſay with *David*, Pſal 39. 12. *I am a Stranger with thee, and a Sojourner, as all my Fathers were.* It is a Condition very troubleſome and very unſettled, ſuch as that of *Pilgrims and Strangers* uſeth to be. This we muſt all acknowledge, if we judge rightly of our preſent State and Condition. *They confeſſed, that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth:* but yet it was not without the Hope and Expectation of a better and happier Condition in Reverſion. So it follows juſt after; *They that ſay ſuch things*, (that is, *that confeſs themſelves to be Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*) *declare plainly,*

Vol. I. *that they ſeek a Country.* This bore up the Patriarchs under all the Evils and Troubles of their Pilgrimage, that they expected an Inheritance, and a quiet and ſettled poſſeſſion of that Good Land which God had promiſed to them. Anſwerably to which, Good Men do expect, after *the few and evil days of their Pilgrimage* in this World are over, a Bleſſed Inheritance in *a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*; and with bleſſed *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, They *look for a City which hath Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*, as it is ſaid of that Good Patriarch at the *Tenth* Verſe of this Chapter.

It is very frequent, not only in Scripture, but in other Authors, to repreſent our Condition in this World, by that of Pilgrims, and Sojourners in a foreign Country: For the Mind which is the Man, and our Immortal Souls, which are by far the moſt Noble and Excellent part of our ſelves, are the Natives of Heaven, and but *Pilgrims and Strangers* here in the Earth; and when the days of our Pilgrimage ſhall be over, are deſigned to return to that

Heavenly

Heavenly Country from which they came, and to which they belong. And therefore the Apoſtle tells us, *Phil.* 3.20. that Chriſtians have relation to Heaven, as their Native place and Country. Ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, *Our converſation is in Heaven*, ſo we render the words; but they properly ſignifie, that Chriſtians are Members of that City and Society which is above; and tho' they converſe at preſent here below, while they are paſſing through this World, yet Heaven is the Country to which they do belong, and whither they are continually tending, *Sedes ubi fata quietas oſtendunt*, where a quiet Habitation, and a perpetual Reſt is deſigned and prepared for them. This acknowledgment *David* makes concerning himſelf, and all the People of God, 1 *Chron.* 29. 15. *For we are Strangers before thee, and Sojourners, as were all our Fathers. Our Days on the Earth are as a Shadow, and there is none abiding.* So likewiſe St. Peter, 1 Pet. 1. 17. *Paſs the time of your Sojourning here in fear*; and *Chap.* 2. *v.* 11. *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims abſtain from fleſhly Luſts.* Ser. 14.

Vol. I. And not only the inſpired Writers of Holy Scripture, but Heathen Authors, do frequently make uſe of this Alluſion. *Plato* tells us, it was a common ſaying, and almoſt in every Man's Mouth, παρεπδημία τις ἐστὶν ὁ Βίος, the Life of Man is a kind of Pilgrimage. And *Tully*, in his Excellent Diſcourſe *de Senectute*, (concerning Old Age) brings in *Cato* deſcribing our paſſage out of this World, not as a departure from our Home, but like a Man leaving his Inn, in which he hath Lodged for a Night or two, *ex vitâ iſtâ diſcedo, tanquam ex hoſpitio, non tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura Diverſorium nobis, non habitandi dedit:* "When I leave "this World (ſays he) I look upon my "ſelf as departing out of an Inn, and "not as quitting mine own Home and "Habitation; Nature having aſſigned "this World to us as a place to So-"journ, but not to Dwell in. Which is the ſame with what the Apoſtle ſays in the Text, concerning the Patriarchs, *They confeſſed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*; and concerning all Chriſtians, *Chap.* 13. 14.

Here

Here we have no continuing City; but we ſeek one to come. Ser. 14.

But I do not intend to follow the Metaphor too cloſe, and to vex and torture it, by purſuing all thoſe little Parallels and Similitudes, which a Lively Fancy might make or find, betwixt the Condition of Strangers and Pilgrims, and the Life of Man during his Abode and Paſſage through this World. I will inſiſt only upon *Two* things, which ſeem plainly to be deſign'd and intended by this Metaphor, and they are theſe;

I. That our Condition in this World is very troubleſom and unſettled; *They confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth.*

II. It implies a tendency to a Future Settling, and the Hopes and Expectation of a happier Condition, into which we ſhall enter when we go out of this World. For ſo it follows in the very next Words after the Text; *They confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth: For they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly, that they ſeek a Country. They that ſay ſuch things*; that is, they that acknowledge themſelves to have

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have lived in a ſuch a reſtleſs and uncertain Condition in this World, travelling from one place to another, as the Patriarchs *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob* did, and yet pretend to be perſwaded of the Goodneſs of God, and the Faithfulneſs of his Promiſe, in which he ſolemnly declared himſelf to be their God, do hereby plainly ſhew, that they expect ſome happier Condition hereafter, wherein that great Promiſe of God will be made good to them to the full.

And theſe are two very weighty and uſeful Conſiderations, that we ſhould both underſtand our preſent Condition in this World, and our future Hope and Expectation after our departure out of it, that ſo we may demean our ſelves ſuitably to both theſe Conditions; both as it is fit for thoſe who look upon themſelves *as Pilgrims and Sojourners* in this World, and likewiſe, as it becomes thoſe who *ſeek and expect a better Country*, and hope to be made partakers of a bleſſed Immortality in another World. I ſhall briefly ſpeak to both theſe; and then ſhew what Effect and Influence the ſerious Meditation of theſe *Two* Points ought to have upon every one of us.

I. That

I. That our Condition in this World is very troubleſome and unſettled. This I take to be principally intended in the Metaphor of *Strangers and Pilgrims*. Such was the Life of the Patriarchs, which is here ſpoken of in the Text; they had no conſtant Abode and fixt Habitation, but were continually wandering from one Kingdom and Country to another; in which Travels they were expoſed to a great many Hazards and Dangers, Afflictions and Miſeries, Affronts and Injuries, as we read at large in the Hiſtory of their Travels in the Old Teſtament. And ſuch is our Condition in this World; it is often troubleſome, and always uncertain and unſettled. Ser. 14.

'Tis often very troubleſom. Not to inſiſt upon the weak Condition of Infancy and Childhood, the helpleſneſs of that State, and inſufficiency of it for its own Preſervation, and the Supply of its natural Wants and Neceſſities; Not to mention the dangerous Vanity and deſperate Folly of Youth, nor the Infirmities and Contempts, the many tedious and wearifom Days and Nights that Old Age is commonly grieved and afflicted withal,

Vol. I. withal, to that degree, as to make Life not only unpleaſant, but almoſt an intolerable Burden to us. Not to dwell upon theſe, which yet take up and poſſeſs a great Share and Portion of our Lives: If we look upon Man in his beſt State, we ſhall find him, as *David* hath long ſince pronounced on him, to be *altogether Vanity*. We need not go a Pilgrimage, and travel into remote Countries, to make Life more troubleſom and uneaſie. In what part of the World ſoever we are, even that which we improperly call our own Home and Native Country, we ſhall meet with Trouble and Inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but *Strangers* in it. More eſpecially good Men are peculiarly liable to a great many Evils and Sufferings upon account of their Piety and Virtue. *They are not of the World* (as our Bleſſed Saviour tells his Diſciples, *John* 15. 19.) and *becauſe they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them*, and taketh all oportunities and occaſions to vex and perſecute them in one kind or other; either by doing all manner of Evil to them, or by ſpeaking all manner of Evil of them.

But

But ſuppoſe we eſcape Trouble upon this account; there are abundance of common and natural Inconveniences, which render Human Life very uneaſie. For either we muſt live alone, or in the Company and Society of others: One of theſe two is neceſſary and unavoidable. Suppoſe we would live alone; How few are there that can enjoy themſelves tolerably alone for any conſiderable time? For though there be a great deal too much of Self-love in Mankind, and Men are generally extreamly fond of themſelves; yet I know not how it happens, (tho ſo it is) that very few men in the World care for their own Company, or can endure, for any conſiderable time, to converſe only with themſelves; nay, for the moſt part, they are ſooner glutted with themſelves, and ſurfeited of their own Converſation, than of the worſt Company they can meet with; a ſhrewd Sign, as one would think, that they know ſomething worſe by themſelves than of any body elſe, or at leaſt they know it more certainly. It is a wiſe and deep ſaying of *Ariſtotle*, *Whoever affects to be alone, muſt be* ἢ Θεὸς, ἢ Θηρίον, *either a God or a Wild Beaſt*; Ser. 14.

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Beaſt; either he muſt be ſufficient for himſelf, and want nothing; or of ſo wild and ſavage a Diſpoſition, as to deſtroy every thing that is weaker, and to run away from every thing that is ſtronger than himſelf. Now Man is neither good enough to be contented and ſatisfied with himſelf, nor bad enough to hate and avoid every body elſe; and therefore he muſt enter into Society, and keep Company with other Men.

And if we go abroad into the World, and try the Converſation of Men, it cannot but grieve us to ſee a great many things, which yet we muſt ſee every day; the Cenſoriouſneſs, and Uncharitableneſs, and Inſincerity of Men one towards another; to ſee with what Kindneſs they will treat one another to the Face, and how hardly they will uſe them behind their Backs. If there were nothing elſe, this one naughty Quality, ſo common and reigning among Mankind, were enough to make an honeſt and true-hearted Man, one that loves Plainneſs and Sincerity, to be heartily ſick of the World, and glad to ſteal off the Stage, where there is nothing native and ſincere, but all perſonated

nated and acted; where the Converſation of a great part of Men is all deſigning and inſidious, full of Flattery and Falſhood, of good Words and ill Offices: *One ſpeaketh peaceably to his Neighbour with his mouth; but in his heart he lieth in wait*, as it is in the Prophet, *Jer.* 9. 8. And when a Man hath done all the good turns he can, and endeavoured to oblige every Man, and not only to live inoffenſively, but exemplarily; he is fairly dealt withal, and comes off upon good Terms, if he can but eſcape the ill Words of Men for doing well, and obtain a Pardon for thoſe things which truly deſerve praiſe. Ser. 14.

But ſetting aſide theſe, and the like melancholy Conſiderations; when we are in the Health and Vigour of our Age, when our Blood is warm, and our Spirits quick, and the Humours of our Body not yet turned and ſowred by great Diſappointments, and grevious Loſſes of our Eſtates, or neareſt Friends and Relations, by a long Courſe of Afflictions, by many croſs Events and calamitous Accidents; yet we are continually liable to all theſe; and the perpetual Fear and Danger of them is no ſmall Trou-

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ble and Uneaſineſs to our Minds, and does in a great Meaſure rob us of the Comfort, and eat out the Pleaſure and Sweetneſs of all our Enjoyments; and, by degrees, the Evils we fear overtake us; and as one Affliction and Trouble goes off, another ſucceeds in the place of it, like *Job*'s Meſſengers, whoſe bad Tidings and Reports of calamitous Accidents came ſo thick upon him, that they overtook one another.

If we have a plentiful Fortune, we are apt to abuſe it to Intemperance and Luxury; and this naturally breeds Bodily Pains and Diſeaſes, which take away all the Comfort and Enjoyment of a great Eſtate. If we have Health, it may be we are afflicted with Loſſes, or deprived of Friends, or croſs'd in our Intereſts and Deſigns, and one thing or other happens to impede or interrupt the Contentment and Happineſs of our Lives. Sometimes an unexpected Storm, or ſome other ſuddain Calamity, ſweepeth away, in an inſtant, all that which with ſo much Induſtry and Care we have been gathering many Years. Or if an Eſtate ſtand firm, our Children are taken away, to whoſe Comfort and Advantage

Advantage all the Pains and Endeavours of our Lives were devoted. Or if none of theſe happen, (as it is very rare to eſcape moſt, or ſome of them) yet for a Demonſtration to us that God intended this World to be uneaſie, to convince us that a perfect ſtate of Happineſs is not to be had here below, we often ſee in Experience, that thoſe who ſeem to be in a Condition as happy as this World can put them into, by the greateſt Accommodations towards it, are yet as far, or farther from Happineſs, as thoſe who are deſtitute of moſt of thoſe things wherein the greateſt Felicity of this World is thought to conſiſt. Many times it ſo happens, that they who have all the Furniture and Requiſites, all the Materials and Ingredients of a Worldly Felicity at their Command, and in their Power, yet have not the Skill and Ability out of all theſe to frame a happy Condition of Life to themſelves. They have Health, and Friends, and Reputation, and Eſtate in abundance, and all outward Accommodations that Heart can wiſh; and yet in the midſt of all theſe Circumſtances of outward Felicity, they are uneaſie in Ser. 14.

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their Minds, and as the Wise Man expresseth it, *In their sufficiency they are in straights*, and are as it were surfeited even of Happiness it self, and do so fantastically and unaccountably nauseate the good Condition they are in, that tho' they want nothing to make them Happy, yet they cannot think themselves so; though they have nothing in the World to molest and disgust them, yet they can make a shift to create as much trouble to themselves, out of nothing, as they who have the real and substantial Causes of Discontent.

Which plainly shews, That we are not to look for Happiness here; 'tis not to be found in this Land of the Living; and after our Enquiries after it, we shall see sufficient Reason to take up *Solomon*'s Conclusion, that *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*; which is much the same with that Aphorism of *David* his Father, which I mentioned before, that *Man in his best estate is altogether vanity.*

But what Happiness soever our Condition in this World is capable of, 'tis most assuredly full of Uncertainty and Unsettlement; we cannot enjoy it long, and every moment we are in danger of being

being deprived of it. Whatever degree of Earthly Felicity we are poſſeſs'd of, we have no Security that it ſhall continue. There is nothing in this World, but, when we are as ſure of it as this World can make us, may be taken away from us by a thouſand Accidents. But ſuppoſe it to abide and continue; we our ſelves ſhall be taken away from it. We muſt die, and *in that very Day* all our Enjoyments and Hopes, as to this World, will *periſh* with us; for here is no abiding Place, *We have no continuing City*; ſo that it is in vain to deſign a Happineſs to our ſelves in this World, when we are not to ſtay in it, but only travel and paſs through it. Ser. 14.

And this is the *Firſt*; Our Condition in this World is very troubleſom and unſettled.

II. Our Condition in this World being a ſtate of Pilgrimage, doth imply a tendency to future Settlement, and the Hopes and Expectation of a happier Condition hereafter. And ſo the Apoſtle reaſons immediately after the Text; *They confeſſed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth; for they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a*

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Country; that is, they who acknowledge themſelves to be *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*, and yet withal profeſs to be perſwaded of the Goodneſs of God and the Fidelity of his Promiſe, *do plainly declare, that they ſeek* another *Country*. This is ſpoken of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, who acknowledged themſelves to be *Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth*; and thereby *declared, that they ſought* another *Country*. Now, ſays the Apoſtle, this cannot be the Country from whence they firſt came, *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, *v.* 15. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that Country from whence they came out, they might have had an oportunity of returning thither*. And therefore he concludes, that the Country which they ſought was a better Country than any in this World. *V.* 16. *But now they deſire a better Country; that is, an Heavenly. Therefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City*. This plainly refers to that famous Declaration or Promiſe of God to the Patriarchs, of being their God; *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob*. Now certainly

tainly this Promiſe of God did ſignifie ſome very great Bleſſing and Advantage to thoſe faithful Servants of God above others. This was not made good to them in this World; for *They confeſſed, that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth.* Where then is the Bleſſing ſpoken of and ſignified by the great Words of that promiſe that *God was their God?* They met with no ſuch Condition in this World, as was anſwerable to the greatneſs of the Promiſe. From hence the Apoſtle argues, that they had a firm Perſwaſion of a future Happineſs; *For they that ſay ſuch things declare plainly, that they ſeek a better Country; that is, an Heavenly. Wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God, ſince he hath prepared for them a City.* And tho' the Promiſe of God to *Abraham* did immediately deſign the Land of *Canaan*, and the earthly *Jeruſalem*; yet the Apoſtle extends it to that which was typified by it; *viz. an Heavenly Country*, the *Jeruſalem which is above*, which, at the 10th Verſe of this Chapter, is called *a City, which hath Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.* And now, ſeeing God had deſigned and prepared Ser. 14.

Vol. I. ſo great a Happineſs for them in another World, well might he be called *their God*, notwithſtanding that they were *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*; that is, Tho' the full Meaning and Importance of this Promiſe was not made good to them in this World, yet it was accompliſh'd to the full in the Happineſs which was deſigned for them in another Life. *And God* need *not be aſhamed to be called their God*; implying, that if nothing had been meant by it beyond this World, this Promiſe, of God's being *their God*, would have fallen ſhamefully ſhort of what it ſeemed to import. And this I conceive to be the true Reaſon, why our Saviour lays ſo much Weight upon this Promiſe, as to pitch upon it for the Proof of the Reſurrection; that is, of a future ſtate of Happineſs in another World.

There are many Conſiderations apt to perſwade Good Men of another Life after this; as, That Mankind is generally poſſeſs'd with this Hope and Perſwaſion; and that the more wiſe and virtuous Men have been, the more plainly have they apprehended the Hopes of Immortality, and the better

have

have they been contented to leave this World, as if, ſeeing farther than other Men, they had a clearer Proſpect of the Happineſs they were entering upon: But above all, that God hath made our Condition in this World ſo troubleſom and unſettled, as if he had deſigned on purpoſe to make us ſeek for Happineſs elſewhere, and to elevate and raiſe our Minds to the Hopes and Expectation of a Condition better and more durable, than any is to be met with in this World; which, conſidering the Goodneſs of God, and his Gracious Providence and Care of Good Men, is a thing of it ſelf extremely credible.

Having thus, as briefly as I could, diſpatched the *Two* Particulars which I propounded to ſpeak to for the Explication of the Text, I ſhould now ſhew what Influence theſe Conſiderations ought to have upon our Lives and Practice.

And if this be our Condition in this World, and theſe our Hopes and Expectations as to another Life; if we be *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*; and *look for a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*; this ought to have a great Influence upon us in theſe following

Vol. I. respects, which I shall at present but very briefly mention.

1. Let us intangle and incumber our selves as little as we can in this our Pilgrimage; let us not ingage our Affections too far in the Pleasures and Advantages of this World; for we are not to continue and settle in it, but to pass through it. A little will serve for our Passage and Accommodation in this Journey; and beyond that, why should we so earnestly covet and seek more?

2. If we be *Pilgrims and Srangers*; then it concerns us to behave our selves blamelesly and inoffensively, remembering, that the Eyes of People are upon us, and that those among whom we live will be very curious and observant of our Manners and Carriage.

3. Let us be chearful and patient under the Troubles and Afflictions of this present Life. They who are in a strange Country, must expect to encounter many Injuries and Affronts, and to be put to great Difficulties and Hazards, which we should endeavour to bear

bear with that Chearfulneſs, as Men that are upon a Journey uſe to bear foul Ways and bad Weather, and inconvenient Lodging and Accommodations. Ser. 14.

4. The Conſideration of our preſent Condition and future Hopes ſhould ſet us above the Fondneſs of Life, and the ſlaviſh Fear of Death. For our Minds will never be raiſed to their true Pitch and Height, till we have in ſome good meaſure conquered theſe two Paſſions, and made them ſubject to our Reaſon. As for this preſent Life, and the Enjoyments of it, What do we ſee in them, that ſhould make us ſo ſtrangely to dote upon them? *Quæ Miſeri lucis tam dira cupido*! This World, at the beſt, is but a very indifferent Place; and he is the wiſeſt Man that bears himſelf towards it with the moſt indifferent affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to ſtay in it as long as God pleaſes.

5. We ſhould always prefer our Duty and a good Conſcience before all the World; becauſe it is in truth more valuable, if our Souls be Immortal, and do

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do ſurvive in another World. For (as our Saviour argues) *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* And thus St. *Paul* reaſoned with himſelf, from the Belief of *a Reſurrection of the juſt and unjuſt. For this cauſe* (ſaith he) *I exerciſe my ſelf alway to have a Conſcience void of offence both toward God and toward Man.*

Laſtly, If we be Sojourners and Travellers, we ſhould often think of our End, and carefully mind the Way to it. Our End is Everlaſting Happineſs; and the Way to it is a conſtant and ſincere and univerſal Obedience to the Commandments of God. When the Young Man in the Goſpel enquired of our Saviour the way to Eternal Happineſs, ſaying, *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit Eternal Life?* His Anſwer to him was, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* We may eaſily miſtake our way; For *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leads to Life, and few there be that find it.* Therefore we ſhould often

ten pray to God, as *David* does, *Pſalm* 119. 19. *I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me.* And *Pſalm* 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my* Heart; *try me, and know my Thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the Way Everlaſting.* Ser. 14.

SER-

SERMON XV.

Good Men Strangers and Sojourners upon Earth.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

HEB. XI. 13.

And confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth.

The whole Verſe runs thus;

Theſe all died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they, &c.

I Have lately in this Place (upon a particular Day and Occaſion) begun to handle theſe Words; I ſhall briefly give you the Heads of what hath been

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been already delivered, and proceed to what remains. And that which I designed from this Text was, To represent to us our present Condition in this World, and to awaken us to a due Sense and Consideration of it. It is the same Condition that all the Saints and Holy Men that have gone before us were in, in this World; and we may all of us say with *David*, *Psal.* 39. 12. *I am a Stranger with Thee, and a Sojourner, as all my Fathers were.*

It is very frequent, not only in Scripture, but in other Authors, to represent our Condition in this World, by that of *Pilgrims and Sojourners* in a far Country. For the Mind, which is the Man, and our Immortal Souls, which are, by far, the most noble and excellent Part of our selves, are the Natives of Heaven, and but *Pilgrims and Strangers* here on the Earth; and when the Days of our Pilgrimage shall be accomplished, are designed to return to that *Heavenly Country* from which they came, and to which they belong. And for the Explication of this Metaphor, I insisted only upon *Two* Things, which

which ſeem plainly to be deſigned and intended by it. Ser. 15.

I. That our Condition in this World is very troubleſom and unſettled; *They confeſſed, that they were Pilgrims and Strangers on the Earth.*

II. It implies a tendeney to a future Settlement, and the Hopes and Expectation of a happier Condition, into which we ſhall enter when we go out of this World.

And theſe I told you are *Two* very Weighty and Uſeful Conſiderations; That we ſhould both underſtand our preſent Condition in this World, and our future Hopes and Expectation after our Departure out of it; that ſo we may demean our ſelves ſuitably to both theſe Conditions; both as is fit for thoſe who look on themſelves as *Pilgrims and Sojourners* in this World; and likewiſe, as it becomes thoſe who *ſeek and expect a better Country*, and hope to be Partakers of a Bleſſed Immortality in another World.

I. That our Condition in this World is very Troubleſom and Unſettled; and this

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this is principally intended by the Metaphor of *Pilgrims and Strangers*. Such was the Life of the Patriarchs here ſpoken of in the Text; they had no conſtant Abode and fixt Habitation, but were continually wandering from one Kingdom and Country to another; in which Travels they were expoſed to a great many Dangers and Sufferings, Affronts and Injuries; as we read at large in the Hiſtory of their Travels in the Old Teſtament. And ſuch is our Condition in this World; it is often Troubleſom, and always Uncertain, and Unſettled; ſo that whatever Degree of Worldly Felicity any Man is poſſeſt of, he hath no Security that it ſhall continue for one Moment.

II. Our Condition in this World being a State of Pilgrimage, it implies a Tendency to a Future Settlement, and the Hopes and Expectation of a Happier Condition, into which we ſhall enter ſo ſoon as we leave this World. For ſo it follows immediately after the Text; *They confeſſed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers on the Earth; For they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that*

that they ſeek a Country. They that ſay ſuch things, that is, They that acknowledge themſelves to have lived in ſuch a Reſtleſs and Uncertain Condition in this World, travelling from one Place to another, as the Patriarchs *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* did; and yet pretend to be perſuaded of the Goodneſs of God, and the Faithfulneſs of his Promiſe, in which He ſo ſolemnly declares himſelf to be *their God*; do hereby plainly ſhew, that they expect ſome Happier Condition hereafter, wherein that Great Promiſe of God will be made good to them to the full; ſo that he need *not be aſhamed to have been called their God.*

Having handled at large theſe *Two* Particulars, I come now to ſhew what Influence the Conſideration of them ought to have upon our Lives and Practices. And if this be our Condition in this World, and theſe our Hopes and Expectations, as to another Life, if we be *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*, and *look for a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*; this ought to have a great Influence upon us in theſe following Reſpects, which I did but briefly mention before; but ſhall now Proſecute and Preſs more largely.

I. Let us Entangle and Incumber our ſelves as little as we can in this our Pilgrimage: Let us not engage our Affections too far in the Pleaſures and Advantages of this World, becauſe we are not to ſtay in it, but to paſs through it. Upon this Conſideration the Apoſtle St. *Peter* doth ſo earneſtly exhort Chriſtians to preſerve themſelves from

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fleshly Lusts, 1 *Pet.* 2. 11. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* The gratifying of our inordinate Lusts, and our Carnal and Sensual Inclinations, is directly opposite both to the Nature of our Immortal Spirits, and to their great Design and Business in this World. Fleshly Lusts do not only pollute and defile, but even quench and extinguish our Diviner part, and do work the ruin and destruction of it; they sink our Affections into the Mud and Filth of this World, and do entangle and detain them there; in a word, they do wholly indispose and unfit us for that Pure and Spiritual and Divine Life, which alone can qualifie us for our Heavenly Country and Inheritance. And therefore while our Souls are sojourning in this World, we should abstain from them, and preserve our selves Unspotted and Untainted by them, as being altogether unuseful, and perfectly contrary to the Laws and Manners of our Heavenly Country. If we wallow in brutish and filthy Lusts, as we pass through this World; our Native Country, when our Souls think to return to it, will reject us and cast us out: When we come to Heaven's Gate, and knock there, expecting to be admitted, and shall cry, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; He will bid us to *depart from Him, because we have been workers of iniquity. Nothing that is unclean* can *enter* into Heaven. He who is to receive us into those Blessed Mansions, hath declared it to be his Immutable Resolution and Decree, that *without Holiness, no man shall see the Lord.* And therefore as ever we hope to see God, in that Happy and

and Blisful State, we must *Cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*; that having render'd our selves as like Him as we can in this World, we may be capable of the Blessed Sight and Enjoyment of Him in the other. Ser. 15.

And as for the Advantages of this World, let us not pursue them too eagerly. We may take the conveniences which fairly offer themselves to us, and be content to want what we cannot honestly have, and without going out of the way of our Duty; considering that we are Travellers, and that a little will serve for our Passage and Accommodation in our Pilgrimage. And beyond that, why should we so earnestly covet more, and trouble our selves for that which is not necessary to our Journey? Why should we at any time deal unjustly to attain any of this World's Goods? They will stand us in stead for so little a while, that we can have no Temptation to injure or oppress any Man, to break the Peace of our Consciences, and to wound our Souls for the attaining of them. If the Providence of God offer them to us, and bring them to our hands, in the use of Honest Diligence and Lawful Means; as we are not to refuse them, so neither are we to set our Hearts upon them, nor to suffer our Affections to be entangled in them.

The wisest use we can make of them, will be, to do like those who traffick in Foreign Parts, to consign our Estates into our own Native Coun-

try, to ſend our Treaſures before us into the other World, that we may have the Benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by Alms and Charity. Whatever we ſpend upon the Fleſh, we leave behind us, and it will turn to no account to us in our own Country: But whatever we lay out for the Relief of the Poor, is ſo much Treaſure laid out and ſecured to our ſelves, againſt another day. So our Bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, *Luk.* 12. 33. That *giving of Alms is providing for our ſelves Bags that wax not old, a Treaſure in the Heavens that faileth not.*

II. If We be Pilgrims and Strangers, then it concerns us to behave our ſelves with great Caution, and to live blameleſly and inoffenſively; remembering that the Eyes of People are upon us, and that thoſe, among whom we Sojourn, will be very prying and curious and narrow Obſervers of our Manners and Carriage. They that are in a ſtrange Country, are not wont to take that Liberty and Freedom, which the Natives of the place may do, but to keep a perpetual Guard upon themſelves, knowing how ſtrictly they are obſerved, and that they live among thoſe who bear no Good Will to them, and that every Bad Thing we do, reflects upon our Nation, and is a Reproach to the Country to which we belong. *Ye are not of the World*; (ſays our Lord) *if ye were of the World, the World would love its own: but ye are not of the World; therefore the World hateth you.* Upon this account the Apoſtle chargeth Chriſtians to be *Harmleſs, and Blameleſs,* and

and *as it becomes the Sons of God to be, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Nation, among whom we* ſhould *ſhine as Lights.* The ſame Argument St. *Peter* uſeth, 1 *Pet.* 2. 11, 12. *I beſeech you, as Pilgrims and Strangers, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, having your Converſation honeſt among the Gentiles*; that is, Conſidering that you are among Strangers and Enemies, and therefore ought to be very careful to bring no Scandal upon your Holy Profeſſion, among thoſe who will be ready to take all advantages againſt you. Particularly, we who pretend to the ſame Heavenly Country, muſt be kind to one another; and whilſt we live among Strangers, have no Quarrels amongſt our Selves. In a ſtrange Country, it uſeth to be a Mighty Endearment of Men to one another, that they are of the ſame Country, and Fellow-Citizens, and this alone is commonly ſufficient to unite their Affections, and to link their Intereſts together. But how little of this is to be ſeen among Chriſtians! How ſhamefully do they Quarrel among themſelves, in the midſt of Enemies and Strangers! as if they had no Relation to one another, and never expected to meet at laſt in the ſame Country, and there to live together for ever. Ser. 15.

III. Let us be as Patient and Chearful as we can, under all the Troubles and Afflictions which we meet with in this Life. They who are in Strange Countries muſt expect to encounter many Injuries and Affronts, and to be put to great Difficulties and Hardſhips. Thoſe which

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are lighter and more tolerable, we muſt bear with Chearfulneſs. Upon a Journey Men uſe to put on all the Pleaſantneſs they can, and to make Sport of all the Inconveniences of the Ways and Weather, and little croſs Accidents that befall them: And thus, if we had but the Art and Wiſdom to do it, many of the leſſer Inconveniences of Human Life might well enough be play'd off, and made matter rather of Mirth and Diverſion, than of Melancholy and ſerious Trouble.

But there are ſome Evils and Calamities of Human Life, that are too heavy and ſerious to be Jeſted withal, and require the greateſt Conſideration, and a very great degree of Patience to Support us under them, and enable us to bear them Decently; as the Loſs of Friends and deareſt Relations; as the Loſs of an Only Son, grown up to be well fixt and ſettled in a Virtuous Courſe, and promiſing all the Comfort to his Parents that they themſelves can wiſh: Theſe certainly are ſome of the Greateſt Evils of this World, and hardeſt to be born. For Men may pretend what they will to Philoſophy, and Contempt of the World, and of the Periſhing Comforts and Enjoyments of it; to the extirpation of their Paſſions, and an Inſenſiblity of theſe things, which the weaker and undiſciplin'd part of Mankind keep ſuch a Wailing and Lamentation about: But when all is done, Nature hath framed us as we are, and hath planted in our Nature ſtrong Inclinations and Affections to our Friends and Relations;

tions; and these Affections are as naturally moved upon such Occasions, and pluck every String of our Hearts as violently, as extream Hunger and Thirst do gnaw upon our Stomachs. Ser. 15.

And therefore it is foolish for any Man to pretend to love things mightily, and to rejoyce greatly in the Enjoyment of them; and yet to be so easily contented to lose them, and to be parted from them. This is to separate things which Nature hath strongly linked together. Whatever we mightily love, does thereby in some sort become part of our Selves; and it cannot hang loose to us, to be separated and divorced from us without Trouble; no more than a Limb, that is vitally and by strong Ligaments united to the Body, can be dropt off when we please, or rent from the Body without Pain. And whoever pretends to have a mighty Affection for any thing, and yet at the same time does pretend that he can contentedly, and without any great Sense or Signification of Pain, bear the Loss of it, does not talk like a Philosopher, but like an Hypocrite; and under a grave Pretence of being a Wise, is in truth, an Ill-natur'd Man. For most certainly, in proportion to our Love of any thing, will be our Trouble and Grief for the Loss of it.

So that under these great and heavier Strokes, we had need both of Faith and Patience. And indeed, nothing but the firm Belief of *a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*, of another Life

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after this, and a bleſſed Immortality in another World, is ſufficient to ſupport a Man in the *few and evil Days of his Pilgrimage*, and to ſuſtain his Spirit under the great Evils and Calamities of this Life. But this fully anſwers all, *That the Afflictions and Sufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* Nay, that if we bear theſe Afflictions patiently, and with a due Submiſſion to the Will of God, (eſpecially our Sufferings for his Truth and Cauſe) it will certainly increaſe our Happineſs in the other World, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

IV. The Conſideration of our Preſent Condition and of our Future Hopes, ſhould ſet us above the Fondneſs of Life, and the ſlaviſh Fears of Death. For our Minds will never be raiſed to their true pitch and height, till we have in ſome good meaſure conquered theſe two Paſſions, and made them ſubject to our Reaſon.

As for this preſent Life, and the Enjoyment of it; What is it that we ſee in them that ſhould make us ſo ſtrangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miſeris tam dira cupido!* This World at the beſt is but a very Indifferent place, and he is the wiſeſt Man that bears himſelf towards it with the moſt Indifferent Mind and Affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to ſtay in it as long as God pleaſeth. And as for Death, tho' the Dread of it be natural, yet why ſhould the

the Terrors of it be ſo very ſurpriſing and amazing to us, after we have conſider'd, that to a good and pious Soul, it is no other but the Gate of Heaven, and an Entrance into Eternal Life? We are apt to wonder to ſee a Man undaunted at the approach of Death, and to be not only contented, but chearful, at the Thoughts of his Departure out of this World, this Sink of Sin, and Vale of Miſery and Sorrow. Whereas, if all things be duly conſidered, it is a greater wonder that Men are ſo patient to Live, and that they are not glad of any fair Excuſe and Opportunity of getting out of this ſtrange Country, and retiring Home, and of ridding themſelves of the Troubles and Inconveniences of Life. For, conſidering the numerous Troubles and Calamities we are liable to in a long Pilgrimage, there are really but *Three* Conſiderations that I can readily think of, that can make this World, and our preſent Condition in it, in any good meaſure tolerable to a wiſe Man; *viz.* That God governs the World; That we are not always to ſtay in it; That there is a Happineſs deſigned and reſerved for us in another place, which will abundantly recompenſe and make amends to us for all the Troubles and Sufferings of this Life. Ser. 15.

And yet it is ſtrange to ſee how faſt moſt Men cling to Life, and that even in Old Age; how they catch at every Twig that may but hold them up a little while; and how fondly they hanker after a miſerable Life, when there is nothing more of Pleaſure to be enjoy'd, nothing more of Satis-

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Satisfaction to be expected and hoped for in it. When they are juſt putting into the Port, and, one would think, ſhould rejoice at their very Hearts, that they ſee Land; yet how glad would they be then of any croſs Wind, that would carry them back into the Sea again? As if they loved to be toſt, and were fond of Storms and Tempeſts.

Nay, the very beſt of us, even after we have made that acknowledgment of *David*; *I am a Stranger and a Sojourner with thee, as all my Fathers were*; are apt with him to be ſtill importuning God for a little longer Life; *O ſpare me a little, that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence, and be no more.* And when God hath granted us this Requeſt, then we would be *ſpared* yet *a little longer.*

But let us remember, that God did not deſign us to continue always in this World; and that he hath on purpoſe made it ſo uneaſie to us, to make us willing to leave it; and that ſo long as we linger here below, we are detained from our Happineſs; *While we are preſent in the Body, we are abſent from the Lord.* This Conſideration made St. *Paul* ſo *deſirous to be diſſolved*, becauſe *he knew, that when his Earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle was diſſolved, he ſhould have a much better Habitation, a Building of God, an Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* This was that which made him ſo full of Joy and Triumph, at the Thoughts of his leaving the World;

2 *Tim.*

2 *Tim.* 4. 6. *I am now ready* (ſays he) *to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which God the righteous Judge ſhall give me in that day.* Ser. 15.

Nay, the Conſideration of this (tho but obſcurely apprehended by them) did raiſe the Spirits of the wiſer and better Heathen, and fill them with great Joy and Comfort at the Thoughts of their Diſſolution. With what Conſtancy and Evenneſs of Mind did *Socrates* receive the Sentence of Death? And with what excellent Diſcourſe did he entertain his Friends juſt before he drank off the Fatal Cup, and after he had taken it down, whilſt Death was gradually ſeizing upon him? One can hardly, without a very ſenſible Tranſport, read *Cato*'s Diſcourſe concerning his Death, as it is repreſented by *Tully* in his Book of Old Age. *I am* (ſays he) *tranſported with a Deſire of ſeeing my Fore-fathers, thoſe Excellent Perſons of whom I have Heard, and Read, and Written; and now I am going to them, I would not willingly be drawn back into this World again*; Quod ſi quis Deus mihi largiatur, ut ex hac ætate repueraſcam, & in cunis vagiam, valdè recuſem. *If ſome God would offer me, at this Age, to be a Child again, and to cry in the Cradle, I would earneſtly refuſe it, and upon no terms accept it. And now that my Race is almoſt run, and my Courſe juſt finiſhed, how loth ſhould I be to be brought back, and made to begin again? For what*

what Advantage is there in Life? Nay rather, what Labour and Trouble is there not in it? But let the Benefit of it be what it will, there is certainly ſome Meaſure of Life as well as of other things, and Men ought to know when they have enough of it. O præclarum diem, cum in illud animorum conſilium cætumque proficiſcar, & cum ex hac turbâ & colluvione diſcedam. *O Bleſſed and Glorious Day, when I ſhall go to that great Council and Aſſembly of Spirits, and have got out of this Crowd and Rabble!* And if a Heathen, who had but ſome obſcure Glimmerings of another Life, and of the Bleſſed State of departed Souls, could ſpeak thus chearfully of Death; how much more may We, who have a clear and undoubted Revelation of theſe things, and to whom *Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Goſpel.*

V. We ſhould alway prefer our Duty and the keeping of a good Conſcience before all the World: becauſe it is in truth infinitely more valuable, if ſo be our Souls be immortal, and do ſurvive in another World, and we muſt there give a ſtrict Account of all the Actions done by us in this Life, and receive the Sentence of Eternal Happineſs or Miſery, *according to the things done in the Body, whether they be Good, or whether they be Evil.* For as our Saviour argues concerning the caſe of denying him and his Truth, to avoid temporal Suffering and Death; *What is a Man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall*

ſhall a Man give in exchange for his Soul? When we are tempted by temporal Intereſt and Advantage, or by the fear of preſent Loſs and Suffering, to deny or diſſemble our Religion, to do any thing that is ſinful in any kind, and contrary to our Duty and Conſcience, let us ask our ſelves; What will be the Profit and Advantage of it? What, if for fear of Men, and what they can do to me, I incur the Wrath and Diſpleaſure of Almighty God? This is infinitely more to be dreaded; and his Frowns are a thouſand times more terrible, than the bittereſt Wrath and cruelеſt Malice of Men. What, if to preſerve this frail and mortal Body, I ſhall evidently hazard the Loſs of my Immortal Soul; and to eſcape a Temporal Inconvenience, I forfeit Everlaſting Happineſs, and plunge my ſelf into Eternal Miſery and Ruine? Would not this be a wild Bargain, and a mad Exchange, for any Temporal Gain and Advantage, to loſe the things that are Eternal? And for the pleaſing of our ſelves for a little while, to make our ſelves miſerable for ever? Ser. 15.

If we confeſs our ſelves to be *Pilgrims and Strangers on the Earth*, and are perſwaded of the Promiſes of God concerning an *Heavenly Country*, where we hope to arrive after *the few and evil days of our Pilgrimage* are over; let us not, by complying with the Humours of Strangers, and the vitious Cuſtoms and Practices of an Evil World, bar our ſelves of our Hopes, and baniſh our

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our ſelves from that happy Place, to which we all profeſs we are going.

We pretend to be travelling towards Heaven: but if we *make ſhipwreck of Faith and a good Conſcience*; we deſtroy our own Hopes of ever arriving at that happy Port. We do not live up to our Expectation of a future Happineſs; if the unſeen Glories of another World do not raiſe us above all the Temptations and Terrors of Senſe. Our Faith and Hope have not their due and proper Influence upon us; if they do not govern our Lives and Actions, and make us ſtedfaſt in the Profeſſion of our Holy Religion, and in the Conſcientious Practice of it. St *Paul* reaſon'd himſelf into this Holy Reſolution, from the Hopes of a bleſſed Reſurrection, *Acts* 24. 15, 16. *I have hope*, ſays he, *toward God, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection of the Dead, both of the Juſt and Unjuſt*, ἐν τούτῳ δὲ, *For this cauſe therefore, I exerciſe my ſelf always to have a Conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men.*

VI. And *Laſtly*, If we be *Sojourners* and *Travellers* in this World; we ſhould often think of our End, and carefully mind the Way to it. Our End is Everlaſting Happineſs, and the direct Way to it is by a conſtant and ſincere and univerſal Obedience to the Laws and Commandments of God. And this in it ſelf is ſo plain a way, that a ſincere and honeſt Man can hardly err in it. And therefore we muſt not ſuffer our ſelves to be led and trained out of it, upon any Pretence whatſoever; not

not by the Wildfire of pretended Illuminations and Enthuſiaſms; nor by the confident Pretence of an Infallible Guide, that will needs ſhew us another way, and perſwade us to follow him blindfold in it. Let us not quit *the Infallible Rule of God's Word*, to follow any *Guide* whatſoever. *If an Apoſtle, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Doctrine* and Way to Heaven, *let him be accurſed.* He who is *the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*, when he was conſulted with about the Way to Eternal Happineſs, knew no other but this. For when the Young Man ask'd him; *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit Eternal Life?* His Anſwer was, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* 'Tis true indeed, that by reaſon of our corrupt Inclinations within, and powerful Temptations without, this Way (eſpecially at our firſt ſetting out) is rugged and difficult. So our Lord hath forewarned us, telling us, That *ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth to Life*, and that *there be few that find it*; therefore we ſhould *ſtrive to enter in*, take great Care and Pains to diſcern the Right Way, and to overcome the Difficulties of our firſt Entrance into it; and ſhould often pray to God, as *David* did, *Pſal.* 119. 19. *I am a Stranger in the Earth; hide not thy Commandments from me*; and *Pſalm* 139. 23, 24. *Search me O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the Way Everlaſting.* Ser. 15.

Thus

Thus, if we would always have our End in our Eye; it would both be a Direction to us in our Way, and an Encouragement to quicken our Pace in it; there being no more powerful Motive to a good Life, than to be assured, that *If we have our Fruit unto Holiness, our End shall be Everlasting Life.*

FINIS.

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